

**KEY TERMS**

# **IN PRAGMATICS**

**NICHOLAS ALLOTT**

## **Key Terms in Pragmatics**

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# **Key Terms in Pragmatics**

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# Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
Introduction: What Is Pragmatics?	1
Key Terms	17
Key Thinkers	200
Key Works	234
<i>Index</i>	245



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# Introduction: What Is Pragmatics?

Pragmatics is not the same thing for all of its practitioners. Some pragmatic theorists see it as the study of language use in general, some as the study of communication, others as an approach to the study of language via language's communicative function.

There is some agreement that questions about speaker meaning and how people communicate are at the centre of pragmatics, but even theorists who accept this have differing views of pragmatics' methods and goals. One of the leading pragmatic theorists, Deirdre Wilson, notes that there are three approaches, broadly speaking. Pragmatics can be seen as a part of philosophy: an attempt to answer certain questions about meaning, in particular the relation between what sentences mean and what speakers mean when they utter them. Alternatively, it can be seen as an extension of the study of grammar in order to take into account and codify some of the interactions between sentence meaning and context. On this view pragmatics belongs to linguistics. Finally, pragmatics can be pursued as an attempt at a psychologically realistic account of human communication; this would make pragmatics part of cognitive science.

Despite these differences about the scope, aims and methods of pragmatics, there is considerable agreement on four fundamentals, particularly among those who focus on communicative use of language. All four points derive from the work of the philosopher Paul Grice:

1. Communication involves a certain complex intention which is fulfilled in being recognized by the addressee.
2. The addressee has to infer this intention from the utterance, a form of inference to the best explanation.
3. Communication is governed by principles or maxims. It is usually assumed that these principles derive from more general principles of rationality or cognition. Griceans, neo-Griceans and relevance theorists propose differing principles.
4. There is a distinction between what a speaker conveys explicitly and what she *implicates*, which are both aspects of speaker meaning or 'what is

communicated'. Many theorists would also claim that speaker meaning includes another component or components. The list of components that have been proposed includes *presupposition*, *conventional implicature* and *illocutionary force*.

These four fundamentals are explained below, starting with the distinction between what speakers state and what they implicate

## Implicature

The central data for pragmatics are cases in which a speaker, in making an utterance, conveys something more than, or different from, the meaning of the words she uses. There are many examples, and these examples fall into different types. In example (1), the second speaker is answering the first speaker's question. But if we look at the words used, we see that what *B* has said does not in itself provide any answer. *B* has stated that he had a haircut yesterday, but that does not entail that he does not want another one, nor that he does. On the other hand, *B* clearly intended his utterance to convey an answer to *A*'s question. In the terminology introduced by the philosopher Paul Grice in his famous 'Logic and Conversation' lectures in 1967, pragmatic theorists say that *B* (or *B*'s utterance) *implicates* that *B* would not like a haircut.

(1) A: Would you like a haircut?

B: I had one yesterday.

An *implicature* is an implication that the speaker intended to convey, according to the simplest definition: not, in general, a logical entailment of the sentence uttered, but something that may be inferred from the fact that the sentence was uttered, and uttered in a certain way, in a certain context.

Once the distinction is made between what a speaker expresses explicitly with the words she says, and what she implicates in saying them, examples appear everywhere. One example that Grice gave has become particularly famous. A professor is asked to provide a letter of recommendation for a student who is a candidate for a philosophy job, and he writes the letter in (2):

(2) Dear Sir,

Mr. Jones's command of English is excellent, and his attendance at tutorials has been regular.

Yours etc.

In writing this, the professor implicates that the student is no good at philosophy, since if he had been able to say something good about his philosophical abilities, he should have done so.

## Figures of speech, and loose use

The distinction between what a speaker's words mean and what she means is also displayed in figures of speech such as irony, metaphor, understatement and hyperbole. Imagine example (3) said by someone who has been waiting for a friend when that friend finally turns up, well past the prearranged time. In this example of *irony*, the speaker does not endorse what she seems to be saying, and means something quite different, although related in that it is a comment on the friend's punctuality.

(3) The best thing about you is that you are always on time.

Most pragmatic theorists would follow Grice in taking what the speaker actually means by (3) to be an implicature. Grice extended this treatment to other figures of speech, although here there is less agreement about whether they involve implicature or some other way in which a speaker's meaning differs from the meaning of the words she says. What is not in doubt is that in examples like (4), (5) and (6) the speaker's meaning is different from the standard meaning of the words. In (4) Shakespeare has Macbeth express metaphorically his reason for continuing to kill in order to hold on to power. Obviously Macbeth does not literally mean by his utterance what the words literally mean.

(4) I am in blood/ Stepp'd in so far, that, should I wade no more, / Returning were as tedious as go o'er.

*Understatement*, as in (5), and *hyperbole*, as in (6), are the converse of each other: in one the speaker means more than her words mean, in the other, less.

(5) I am a bit hungry. (Said by someone who hasn't eaten for days.)

(6) I'm starving. (Said by someone whose last meal was a few hours previously.)

*Loose use* is a related phenomenon. If a speaker utters (7) she will be taken as committed to something less precise than her words might suggest. In most circumstances we would not find what she says misleading if she was in fact driving at 60.3 miles per hour, or even 58 miles per hour, but would not expect her to have uttered (7) if her speed was closer to 50 or 70 miles per hour.

(7) I was driving at 60 miles an hour.

## Reference assignment and disambiguation

As well as implicatures and figures of speech there are more mundane ways in which what a speaker means goes beyond what her words mean. Words like 'he', 'they', 'this', 'that', 'here' and 'there' are known as *indexicals*. The linguistic meaning of an indexical underspecifies (i.e. does not fully determine) the meaning that it conveys in use. Reading (8) out of context we do not know who the speaker met where, or when it happened. We need to know something about the context in order to work out which person, time and location the speaker intended to refer to, that is to *assign reference* to the indexical words.

(8) I met her the previous day, just there.

The problem created for a hearer by *ambiguous* linguistic expressions such as the headline in (9) is somewhat similar. Here there is a choice between two structures that the speaker may have intended and the hearer must *disambiguate*: that is, choose the intended sense.

(9) Crocodiles alert as floods hit Australia.

*Reference assignment* and *disambiguation* are usually treated as necessary elements in recovering what a speaker says (to use Grice's terminology) or what she expresses explicitly (as some other theorists would prefer to say), in contrast to what she implicates. What ambiguous examples and examples with indexicals have in common with cases of implicature is that knowing the linguistic meaning of the words uttered is not enough for a hearer to know what the speaker meant.

## Speech acts and illocutionary force

There are some further ways in which speakers typically mean more than the linguistic meaning of words they have uttered. For example, an utterance of the sentence in (10) might be a promise, a threat, a prediction or an order, or, with different intonation, a question.

(10) Third battalion will retake the ridge by nightfall.

In pragmatics, the difference between (e.g.) a statement, an order and a promise is said to be a difference in *illocutionary force*, using terminology introduced by the philosopher J. L. Austin in his work on speech acts. Speech acts can be indirect: not every promise begins 'I promise to . . .', not every prediction begins 'I predict that . . .' and so on. Therefore the illocutionary force intended by a speaker may go beyond the words that the speaker has uttered (and typically does). A hearer of the utterance in (10) has to work out from clues in the context what force the speaker intended.

## Presupposition

There are also examples where the speaker seems to take something for granted, or require the hearer to accept it as taken for granted. For example, in uttering (11), a speaker is expecting his audience to take it from him that he has a cousin and his cousin has or had a grandmother. Similarly, a speaker uttering (12) apparently takes for granted (or '*presupposes*', to use the usual technical term) that John used to smoke and that he has been trying to give up.

(11) My cousin's grandmother was the first woman at the South Pole.

(12) Has John managed to give up smoking yet?

Attention was drawn to cases like (11) in the 1950s by the philosopher Peter Strawson, who had studied with Grice. From around 1970 a great deal of attention has been devoted to the phenomenon of *presupposition* by linguists and philosophers. It is often claimed that examples like these show that what is presupposed is a distinct level of speaker meaning, in addition to what a speaker expresses explicitly, her intended illocutionary force, and what

she implicates. On the other hand, some theorists argue that information that is taken for granted is part of what is implicated.

## Semantics and pragmatics

The suggestion that this discussion has been implicitly making is that we could see pragmatics as the study of what is communicated (or what a speaker means) minus the linguistic meanings of the words uttered. Some clarification of what is meant by this is necessary. First, one might wonder what the 'linguistic meaning' of a word is. Roughly, the answer is that the linguistic meaning of a word is its stable meaning: it can be thought of as the meaning that it would have even if no one happened to use it, or as its meaning in the mental lexicon of a native speaker of the language.

A second point is that *semantics*, the study of the meanings of linguistic expressions, is of course more complicated than just a list of words with their meanings. For one thing, we should talk of *lexical items* rather than words, since (a) some idioms (fixed bits of language bigger than words) have fixed meanings – for example 'kick the bucket' has a meaning that cannot be predicted from the linguistic meanings of its parts: 'kick', 'the' and 'bucket' – and (b) so do some sub-parts of words (morphemes). What is more, the meanings of phrases and sentences are not formed just by adding up the meanings of the lexical items in them, as the following examples show. These sentences contain the same lexical items but have quite different (although related) meanings:

(13) Dogs hate cats.

(14) Cats hate dogs.

It is the job of semantic theory (in combination with syntactic theory) to explain these kinds of facts about the meanings of phrases and sentences: how they depend on the meanings of their parts and the way that those parts are put together.

Pragmatics can then be defined as the study of what is communicated (or speaker meaning) minus the part that semantics deals with: PRAGMATICS = SPEAKER MEANING – SEMANTICS.

One rather odd consequence of this definition would be that on some views of what semantics does, this will make the fixed linguistic meanings of

certain words fall into pragmatics. One definition of a semantic theory for a natural language is that it is something that tells you the *truth conditions* of the sentences in that language. Certain words have linguistic meanings that are wholly or partly non-truth-conditional: an example is 'but'. Examples (15) and (16) are both true in just the same circumstances: if (and only if) John likes cake and Mary loves biscuits. (In other words, they have the same truth conditions.) However, (16) conveys in addition that there is some kind of contrast between John's liking of cake and Mary's love of biscuits.

(15) John likes cake and Mary loves biscuits.

(16) John likes cake but Mary loves biscuits.

Grice suggested that the extra meaning contributed by 'but' over and above the truth-conditions of the sentence is a *conventional implicature*. Conventional implicature differs from the implicatures discussed above, which are *conversational implicatures*, in that it arises from the linguistic meaning (also sometimes called the conventional meaning) of a word, rather than from the conversational situation.

Since 'but' contributes to truth conditions (as 'and' does) and also to non-truth-conditional meaning, on the proposed definition the study of its meaning would belong to both semantics and pragmatics, and in fact pragmatics is often taken to include the study of non-truth-conditional meaning. A different view of the distinction between pragmatics and semantics allocates all linguistically encoded meaning to semantics. On this view, the study of lexically encoded non-truth-conditional meaning falls under non-truth-conditional semantics.

## Intentions and communication

There is a more fundamental objection to the view that pragmatics simply fills in what semantics cannot explain about linguistic communication. One sign of this complication is that we can communicate without using words at all (and without using non-linguistic signs with fixed meanings, like thumbs-up for 'OK'). Suppose Mary is eating and has her mouth full and John asks:

(17) John: What did you do today?

*Mary mimes writing, sealing envelopes, sticking stamps on them.*



Mary is communicating that she wrote letters that day. Since her action is intended to be communicative, it counts as an utterance, in the technical sense used in pragmatics. We can say that in making this utterance, she conveys that she wrote letters that day.

How does this work? How can John work out what Mary wants to convey? In a lecture Grice gave in 1948 (which was published as a paper in 1957), Grice set out his theory of meaning. According to Grice, the words or gestures that a speaker utters are a clue to speaker meaning, where speaker meaning is analysed in terms of an intention that the speaker has, which Grice called the speaker's M(eaning)-intention. This M-intention can be decomposed into a number of separate intentions, and these intentions are nested, or stacked. The basic intention is to produce a certain response in the addressee. In the example, Mary wants John to entertain the idea that she wrote letters that day. There is a further intention, that the addressee realize that the speaker is trying to get something across. Mary does not want John to just suddenly entertain the idea that she has been writing letters; she also intends him to realize that she wanted him to realize that. There may be still more levels of intention involved in communication: Grice postulated a third level and there has been much debate about whether the three intentions are necessary or sufficient.

The crucial point is that on Grice's account, the speaker's recognition of the communicator's M-intention fulfils that M-intention. Grice's examples make the point clear. Suppose there is someone in your room and you want him to leave. You might bodily throw him out, or you could (if you knew he was avaricious), throw some money out of the window into the street. If he left just because he wanted to go and collect the money, then no communication is involved. But you might get him to leave (or to consider leaving, at least) by letting him know that you wanted him to. You could do this linguistically, by saying something like 'I think you should leave now', or non-linguistically, by giving him a little push. In this last case he would wonder why you pushed him, and he might infer that you wanted him to realize that you wanted him to leave.

In explanations of this sort, the addressee witnesses the speaker (or communicator, more broadly) behave in a certain way, that is make a gesture or utter a phrase, and infers that the best explanation for that behaviour is that the speaker had a certain intention. According to this view of communication, even an uttered sentence is, strictly speaking, only a clue to what the speaker

meant. Of course sentences are generally much more specific and detailed clues than gestures, since they can carry a great deal of linguistically encoded information. But in principle the addressee must infer what relation there is between the information encoded in the phrase uttered and the intention with which the speaker produced that phrase, since it is the M-intention that ultimately matters in communication. On this view, pragmatic inference is necessary for all communication, not just those cases where speaker meaning outstrips sentence meaning.

Summarizing: according to Grice's theory of meaning, communication involves (a) inferential recovery of (b) certain speaker intentions. Most pragmatic theorists accept this general picture.

## Pragmatic principles

An obvious question is how hearers can recognize the relevant speaker intentions, and how speakers can have reasonable confidence that their intended meaning will be understood. Grice suggested (in lectures given in 1967) that conversation is governed by certain rules and principles, and that hearers understand speakers on the assumption that they are either conforming with these rules, or that if they are not they have a good reason. Specifically, Grice proposed a Cooperative Principle (CP) and several conversational maxims. The idea is that a rational speaker will try to be helpful and therefore she will generally aim to meet certain standards, described by the maxims. There are maxims of quality (truthfulness), quantity, relevance and manner: a speaker should try to give information that is true; will try not to give information that she does not have sufficient evidence for; will try to give as much information as is required, not too much and not too little; will try to give relevant information; and will try to make the way that she says things clear and easy to understand.

While the claim is that the CP and maxims govern conversation generally, Grice was particularly interested in showing that they could explain implicature, as in examples (1) and (2) above. If a speaker's utterance appears to violate the CP or one of the maxims, then the hearer may still assume that the CP is in effect. On the assumption that the speaker was trying to be helpful, she must have had a reason for saying something that apparently violates a maxim. What could that reason be? If what a speaker has *said* does not, in itself, conform to all the maxims, that could be because the speaker wanted

to get across something else in addition to, or instead of what she was saying, namely an implicature. What is communicated overall is then still truthful, informative, relevant etc., and the assumption is vindicated that the CP is still in effect.

Most pragmatic theorists agree that conversation (and communication more generally) is governed by principles. Some accept the CP and maxims as Grice proposed them, but other theorists have proposed alternative systems, mostly with fewer principles and rules. A common criticism of Grice's theory is that there are too many maxims and too many ways of generating implicatures, including blatant violations of maxims, apparent violations and clashes between maxims.

Neo-Griceans propose two principles (Horn's system) or three (Levinson's). Horn has a Q-principle, which says that the speaker should be maximally informative, and an R-principle, which says that the speaker should not say too much. These principles are opposed but complementary, and are seen as manifestations of a fundamental tension in language and language use between explicitness and economy.

Relevance theory has a single Communicative Principle of Relevance: that each utterance raises a presumption of its own optimal relevance. Essentially the claim is that in making an utterance a speaker takes up some of her hearer's attention and this means that there is a fallible presumption that what she says will provide a good (in fact optimal) pay-off in information, relative to the cost involved in processing it. The Communicative Principle and presumption of optimal relevance are specific to communication, but they are argued to be instances of a more general tendency, that cognition tends to be geared to maximize relevance.

## **A brief history**

The description of pragmatics given above provides some hints about its history, in particular Grice's centrality to its development. This section adds a few details and dates without attempting a comprehensive account. For the sake of simplicity, a crude division is made into three periods: (1) the prehistory of pragmatics, from antiquity until Grice's lecture on meaning; (2) a classical period from the 1940s to the 1960s, during which time Grice was still working on meaning and developing his theory of conversation, and Austin was working on speech acts; and (3) the modern period, starting with

the dissemination of Grice's William James lectures from 1967. The middle, classical period is dealt with first.

### **Pragmatics and the ordinary language philosophers**

Grice's work on meaning and conversation was not conducted in isolation. A number of other Oxford philosophers were actively involved in related work during the 1940s, '50s and '60s. The most important contributor apart from Grice was J. L. Austin, whose work on speech acts has already been mentioned. Another reason why Austin was a key figure is that he was the organizing force of a group of philosophers whose work became known as ordinary language philosophy. The prevailing method among these philosophers was 'linguistic botanizing': paying close attention to the distinctions made by ordinary language on the assumption that the way people speak makes many subtle distinctions that are worthy of philosophical investigation. These philosophers were not necessarily interested in studying language as such, as linguists are, but they found themselves drawn into thinking about such questions as what saying or stating involves and what else speakers do with language. Grice's theories of conversation and meaning and Austin's views on speech acts are, in effect, different (perhaps complementary) answers to these questions.

In addition to Grice and Austin, other philosophers from this group whose work has had an impact on pragmatics include Peter Strawson, J. O. Urmson, R. M. Hare and Stuart Hampshire. Of these Strawson has probably had the most influence: through reintroduction of the idea of presupposition, mentioned above, and because of an influential criticism that he made of Austin's conception of speech acts.

Austin was particularly interested in how certain speech acts create social facts, for example the speech act of naming a ship. Once the act has been successfully performed, the ship has its new name, by virtue of social conventions. Austin pointed out that there are conditions that have to be met for a speech act to be successful: felicity conditions. The felicity conditions for naming a ship and for other institutional speech acts, such as declaring a defendant guilty and passing sentence, are also social in their character: the act must be performed by the right person, at the right time, in the right way, using a proper form of words and so on.

According to Strawson, Austin's interest in these institutional cases led him to neglect the important point that many speech acts are not in this sense

social. A more Gricean view is that what is important for successful communication is the recognition of the intention of the speaker to perform a particular speech act. For example, if a speaker utters an interrogative sentence, did she mean what she said as a genuine request for information, or a rhetorical question, or with some other force?

Another difference between Austin and Grice's views is that Grice was more inclined to separate use of language from meaning. Grice saw this as a desirable corrective to the ordinary language style of philosophizing. For example, Austin was aware of something similar to what is sometimes known as 'the division of pragmatic labour'. In his article 'A plea for excuses' he expounded the idea that there is 'no modification without aberration'. The idea is that language has a natural economy, so we can only use a modifying expression 'if we do the action named in some *special* way or circumstance'. As an illustration of the point, he said that it would be redundant and misleading, rather than false, to say that someone sat down *intentionally*, unless there was some special reason to say it that way. People normally sit down intentionally, but we would only go to the trouble of including the modifier 'intentionally' if there was some doubt about whether the action was deliberate or not: perhaps it looked accidental.

While Grice agreed with the general point (and used a similar argument in a paper on perception, written around the same time), he wrote in a private note (cited in Siobhan Chapman's biography of Grice) that the principle as Austin states is wrong. In many cases it is more natural to use a modifier than not. Grice noted that 'aberrations are only needed for modifications that are *corrective* qualifications'. As he wrote, no aberration is required to justify the phrase 'in a taxi' as a modifier in 'He travelled to the airport in a taxi.'

In addition, Austin interpreted the principle as concerning *language*, not language use. He said that use of the modifier in the wrong circumstances is not only not required, but actually impermissible. Here he missed the essentially Gricean point that a speaker can always say things in a way that the hearer might find uneconomical or surprising, and that if she does, then typically the hearer will look for an interpretation that justifies the use of the unexpected choice of words.

### The term 'pragmatics'

The post-war Oxford philosophers did not generally use the term 'pragmatics' in their work on language use, although it had already been proposed as a

label for the study of meaning in use by the American philosopher Charles Morris. In his *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (1938) he distinguished between syntax, the study of the formal relations of signs to each other, semantics, the study of the meaning of signs in terms of the objects that they denote or might denote and pragmatics, 'the science of the relation of signs to their users' (p. 29). He expanded on this in his *Signs, Language, and Behavior* (1946): pragmatics 'deals with the origins, uses, and effects of signs within the total behavior of the interpreters of signs' (p. 219). Morris' views are one origin of the very broad conception of pragmatics as the study of language use in general mentioned at the beginning of this introduction.

### Prehistory of pragmatics

Of course, interest in language use, communication and the difference between what is said and what is meant did not start with Morris' definition or the work of the Oxford philosophers. Since antiquity, philosophers and rhetoricians have been interested in cases in which speakers mean something different from what they say. We might (somewhat flippantly) call this period the prehistory of pragmatics. The linguist Larry Horn has traced some of the central concerns of modern pragmatics back to the work of earlier writers, for example in his book 'A Natural History of Negation' and a more recent article, 'Presupposition and implicature'.

Classical rhetoricians were aware of figures of speech in which the speaker means something different from the words produced. According to Horn, the distinction between what is said and what is meant, and therefore between what is said and what is meant but not said, goes back at least to the fourth century rhetoricians Servius and Donatus, whose description of understatement is as a figure of speech in which we say less but mean more. Similarly, the classical definition of verbal irony is as a figure in which the meaning is the opposite of what one's words mean.

Horn has shown that in the nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill and Augustus de Morgan distinguished between the strict logical sense of 'some', which is compatible with *all*, and its use in common conversation, where use of 'some' often suggests *not all*, and that their explanations for the difference are thoroughly Gricean:

If I say to any one, 'I saw some of your children today', he might be justified in inferring that I did not see them all, not because the words mean it, but

because, if I had seen them all, it is most likely that I should have said so: even though this cannot be presumed unless it is presupposed that I must have known whether the children I saw were all or not. (Mill, writing in 1867, p. 501)

There is also a prehistory to the concept of presupposition. Before Strawson, Gottlob Frege also thought that use of a singular referring expression presupposed the existence of the individual described, and Horn has shown that another nineteenth-century philosopher, Christoph von Sigwart, had a rather modern view of the subject. As Horn says, Sigwart's view 'that a presuppositionally unsatisfied statement is misleading or inappropriate though true foreshadows the pragmatic turn to come.'

### **The emergence of pragmatics as a distinct field**

The use of the word 'pragmatics' to describe a separate field of study, on a par with syntax and semantics, was established during the 1970s. Around this time the term was being used in a different way by philosophers concerned with formal languages. For the formal semanticist Richard Montague, writing in the late 1960s and following the way the linguist and philosopher Yehoshua Bar-Hillel used the term in the 1950s, pragmatics was the study of any language containing indexical terms. As Levinson observed in his classic textbook, this would make the study of all natural language fall under pragmatics, since all natural languages have indexical elements.

The modern use of the term 'pragmatics' was emerging by the late 1960s in philosophy. Robert Stalnaker's 1970 article 'Pragmatics' gives a definition: 'pragmatics is the study of linguistic acts and the contexts in which they are performed' and contrasts pragmatics with semantics, which, for Stalnaker, is the study of propositions.

According to Gerald Gazdar, 'pragmatics had become a legitimate subdiscipline in linguistics by the late 1970s but it wasn't in the early 1970s.' The key factors in the emergence of linguistic pragmatics appear to have been the impact of Grice's *Logic and Conversation* lectures, circulated in mimeograph form from the late 1960s; the publication of some of the lectures as standalone papers; and the publication during the 1970s of a number of Ph.D. theses and subsequent work by linguists concerned with pragmatic topics, including Larry Horn, Ruth Kempson and Deirdre Wilson.

## Modern pragmatics

The current state and recent history of pragmatics are too diverse and complex to describe briefly. A few areas of interest may be picked out.

Early in the modern period, disagreement about the principles that govern communication led to fragmentation of the field into Griceans, neo-Griceans and relevance theorists, among others. There are also pragmatic theorists who work primarily on speech acts. In addition, the *Journal of Pragmatics* and the International Pragmatics Association represent a very wide variety of work falling under the broad conceptions of pragmatics as the study of language use in general and the study of language through its use.

From the 1970s many theorists have been interested in developing formal accounts of phenomena where this seems possible, particularly scalar implicature, presupposition and conventional implicature. This work is now known as formal pragmatics, and has close links to dynamic approaches to semantics such as Discourse Representation Theory.

In more cognitively oriented work, including relevance theory, there has been interest in the structure of the mind and in how pragmatic inference is performed. The proposal in psychology that the mind/brain is massively modular has been influential across the cognitive sciences, and Sperber and Wilson have postulated that there is a dedicated pragmatics module. Work in psychology on *mindreading* (or ‘theory of mind’), the ability humans have to infer other’s mental states from observation of their actions, also appears to be of direct relevance to pragmatics.

Pragmatic inference is fast and seems not to be hugely effortful. As the linguist Gilles Fauconnier says, there is an ‘illusion of simplicity’, given that the task performed is actually rather complex. Some pragmatic theorists have recently been exploring the possibility of adopting insights from research into fast and frugal heuristics. This research programme aims to show that cognition uses simple, well-adapted mechanisms to solve complex problems rapidly and accurately.

Another very recent development is the new field of experimental pragmatics, coming into being at the intersection of pragmatics, psycholinguistics, the psychology of reasoning and developmental pragmatics, the last of which is itself a relatively new area of work.

Finally, there has been a great deal of interest in the linguistic underdeterminacy thesis, the idea that the linguistic material in an utterance often or



typically underdetermines the proposition expressed by the speaker. After considerable controversy, this thesis (in some version) is becoming a new orthodoxy, although rearguard actions are still being fought by those who want to maintain at all costs that propositional logical form mirrors sentence form. This debate has gone hand in hand with another about the relations between several distinctions: between semantics and pragmatics, the explicit and the implicit, the truth-conditional and the non-truth-conditional, and coding and inference. This research raises fundamental questions concerning the nature of human communication and the scope of pragmatic theory.

Robyn Carston's book, *Thoughts and Utterances*, (2002) is an excellent summary of the debates around underdeterminacy and at the same time a major contribution to them from an influential pragmatic theorist. It addresses a wide range of issues in modern pragmatics and would be a good place to learn more about the current state of the art.

There is also a list of key works starting on page 234 below, and works that are especially suitable as introductory texts are marked.

# Key Terms

## Abductive inference

In abductive inference, one variety of which is inference to the best explanation, one reasons from a fact that is to be explained to an explanation for that fact, typically its cause. For example, if you see that there is water all over your kitchen floor, you might infer that your washing machine has broken down. The breaking-down of your washing machine seems to you to be the best explanation of the water on the floor.

Abductive inferences contrast with deductive inferences such as the inference from premises *P* and *If P then Q* to the conclusion *Q*. Here, if the premises are true, the conclusion must be true. Abductive inferences, on the other hand, are non-demonstrative. This means that they are uncertain, and open to revision. It might be, for example, that the correct explanation of the water on your floor is a broken pipe under the sink, or your freezer defrosting itself, or something else again.

Grice showed that non-demonstrative inferences of this type are central to pragmatics. A speaker makes an utterance. How does the hearer interpret it? He seeks an explanation that would explain the utterance, in terms of what the speaker intended.

See also: speaker meaning, conversational maxims

## Abuse

In Austin's work on speech acts, an abuse is one of two ways in which a speech act can be infelicitous. Abuses result from a failure to meet felicity conditions that require of participants in a speech act certain attitudes or certain subsequent behaviour.

For example, it is an abuse if a speaker utters 'I promise to paint your house,' with no intention of subsequently painting the house, or if she has the intention but does not subsequently carry out the action. It would also be

an abuse for someone to enter into a bet with no intention of paying up, although if she won, the abuse might never be noticed.

See also: felicity conditions, misfire, speech acts

## Accessibility

In relevance theory, and in cognitive science more generally, the degree to which it is easy to recall a stored piece of information or other item from memory, or to derive information from a stimulus by processing it. Accessibility is a factor in processing effort for cognitive processes. The easier it is to retrieve or derive needed information, the lower the processing effort, other things being equal.

Accessibility depends on the allocation of attention at each moment. Thus such factors as the topic of conversation and other details of the environment that are receiving attention affect accessibility. Accessibility also depends on the organization of memory and the way that information search is conducted.

In psycholinguistics it has been found that the accessibility of a sense of a word largely depends on recency and frequency, that is, on how recently it has been used in the current conversation with that sense and how often it is generally used with that sense. Items that are higher-frequency and items that have recently been used are easier to retrieve.

See also: processing effort

## Accommodation

When an utterance presents some information as part of the background, but this information is not already known to the hearer, the hearer is expected to accommodate that information. For example, if a speaker says 'My aunt's parrot is ill' the speaker will expect the hearer to take it from her (if she does not already know it) that she does in fact have an aunt with a parrot. In this case the speaker has told the hearer something by, in a sense, proceeding as though the speaker already knows it.

The use of the word 'accommodation' for such cases is due to the philosopher David Lewis, although the notion is present in earlier work by Grice, Karttunen and Stalnaker.

This sort of case is often treated in terms of presupposition. According to this kind of account, each lexical item has two types of encoded meaning: its

contribution to assertions and its contribution to presuppositions. For an utterance to be felicitous, any information it presupposes must *either* already be in the common ground, *or* it must be able to be accommodated, that is, added to the common ground and treated as though it was already part of the common ground.

Accommodation is not always possible. For example, most hearers would not accommodate what is taken for granted by a typical utterance of "My aunt's pet dinosaur is ill."

See also: common ground, presupposition

## Ad hoc concept

In relevance theory, a concept formed on one occasion, for that occasion, is called an *ad hoc* concept. Relevance theory appeals to *ad hoc* concepts in its explanation of metaphor, loose use, hyperbole and other issues in lexical pragmatics.

According to this account, when a word is uttered, the concept that the word encodes is made accessible for construction of interpretation of the utterance. However, only relevant features of the concept are accessed and incorporated into the proposition expressed.

An utterance of 'John is a prickly pear' as a metaphor might express the proposition: JOHN IS A PRICKLY\_PEAR\*, where the asterisk conventionally marks an *ad hoc* concept: in this case PRICKLY\_PEAR\*, which shares with the encoded concept such features as *difficult to approach*, and *potentially hazardous*, but probably not *is a plant* or *rich in alkaloids* or *comes from the new world*.

Note that this example illustrates the claim made in relevance theory that the information associated with a concept may include both necessary conditions (e.g. *is a plant*) and encyclopaedic information (e.g. *potentially hazardous*). Both types of information may be used in the construction of *ad hoc* concepts.

See also: broadening, concept, lexical pragmatics, loose use, hyperbole, metaphor, narrowing

## Adjacency pair

In Conversational Analysis, an adjacency pair is two utterances immediately after the other in sequence, where one is a response ('second pair part') to the other ('first pair part'). The illocutionary force of the response or even the words used may be guided or mandated by social convention. For example,

in many cultures, there is a conventional expression that follows being thanked: in Italian, 'Grazie'/'Prego', in German, 'Danke'/'Bitte'.

Patterns of this sort vary across languages and cultures. For example, in English there are many choices for the response to being thanked, including, 'Don't mention it'; 'It's nothing'; 'You're welcome' and 'My pleasure', and there is no social obligation to say anything.

Often it is the combination of functions or illocutionary forces of the two utterances which make an adjacency pair. For example a question is often (but not always) followed by an answer, a greeting by another greeting, a bet with an acceptance or a rejection. Some of these patterns may vary across cultures.

See also: turn

## Ambiguity

In ordinary language, *ambiguous* means having more than one interpretation, or more than one meaning. However, this very general definition is of limited use to pragmatic theorists because all words, phrases and sentences can be interpreted differently in different contexts, but we do not want to say that they are all ambiguous.

The definition usually used in linguistics and pragmatics is more precise: A sequence of linguistic signs (written, spoken or signed) is ambiguous if and only if it is assigned more than one meaning by the grammar. In other words, ambiguous expressions are expressions that have more than one meaning in the language, *before* (as it were) the further complication of interpretation in context is brought in. Ambiguity in this strict sense of the term is a context-independent phenomenon.

In linguistics there are two kinds of ambiguity, *structural* ambiguity and *lexical* ambiguity. Structural ambiguity is due to the syntactic structure of the utterance, as in:

They are fighting fish.

Lexical ambiguity occurs when one form corresponds to more than one word with different meanings, like 'bank' in:

I pass the bank on the way to work.

'Ambiguity' is sometimes used as a cover term for both ambiguity as described here and polysemy.

See also: disambiguation, lexical ambiguity, polysemy, structural ambiguity

## Anaphora

When a word or phrase refers to an object via a link with another word or phrase that also refers, linguists say that one is anaphoric on the other. Many different types of expression can function anaphorically, including pronouns, reflexives, demonstratives and definite descriptions. Anaphoric use of such expressions is in contrast with deictic use where they pick out their referent directly.

In the examples below the items anaphorically linked are underlined. When the dependent term is to the left, as in the fourth example, linguists sometimes call the relation 'cataphora'.

John admires himself.

John loves his mother.

A man walks in the park. He whistles.

His mother loves John.

Anaphor is a phenomenon that has syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspects. In syntax, a great deal of work has been done on anaphor within sentences, particularly in Binding Theory, a component of generative grammar. It is often argued that only some of the relevant phenomena should be explained within syntactic theory, with the remainder left to pragmatics.

Cross-sentential cases can be seen as discourse binding or as co-reference of two expressions to the same object. In some cases there appear to be binding relations. An alternative explanation for some examples is the philosopher Jonathan Evans' 'E-type' analysis.

## Anti-inferential theories of communication

Anti-inferential and anti-intentional theories of communication challenge received wisdom in pragmatics. According to the dominant theoretical tendencies in pragmatics, utterances are intentional actions, utterance meaning is a function of what the speaker intended to convey, and utterance interpretation

requires the hearer to infer the relevant speaker intentions from the perceptible facts about the utterance: the words uttered, the ways they are said.

Anti-inferentialists (philosophers Tyler Burge and Ruth Millikan for example) reject this account. Millikan's alternative is a perceptual theory of utterance interpretation. On this account, utterances give rise to beliefs in no less direct a way than perception does. For example, being told "Spot is on the mat" gives rise to the belief that Spot is on the mat without consideration of the speaker's intentions, much as *seeing* Spot on the mat would give rise to that belief.

## Argumentation theory

The systematic study of discourse that is intended to persuade rationally, including the study of logical arguments and fallacies and their uses. If pragmatics is understood very broadly as the study of language use, then argumentation theory becomes a sub-field of pragmatics, since persuading by the use of arguments is one use of language. Argumentation theorists investigate normative as well as descriptive aspects of language use: not only whether a particular argument does persuade, but whether it should.

## Assertion

A type of speech act. An assertion puts forward a proposition as true. Assertions differ from questions and orders (roughly) in that they provide information rather than requesting it or requesting that something be done. This is sometimes called a difference in 'direction of fit'.

Assertions share the 'word-to-world' direction of fit with some other speech acts, such as suppositions and guesses, but differ in other respects. For example, if you ask a NASA scientist about the Martian climate he might inform you of some facts, for example by saying, 'The atmosphere is very rarefied' (an assertion). A different type of speech act would be to suggest that you entertain a possibility as true for the sake of argument, for example: 'Suppose it never rains on Mars. If that were true, then . . . '.

In Searle's categorization of speech acts, assertions fall under the class of 'representative', or 'assertive' speech acts; indeed they are the paradigm case of this class of speech acts.

In many languages, including English, the verb that means 'assert' can be used explicitly to perform an assertion: I (hereby) assert that . . . . However it is more usual to leave the intended force of assertions implicit.

See also: assertives, direction of fit

## Attributive concept

The term 'attributive' is used in at least three different ways in pragmatics and related fields. In relevance theory, *attributive use of a concept* is where a word or phrase is used to express a concept that a speaker attributes to someone else and which she need not endorse herself. A concept used in this way is sometimes called an *attributive concept*. Attributive use is a type of interpretive use: specifically, it is interpretive use in which there is attribution of a thought or utterance to another.

The expression 'attributive use' is also used to mark a distinction between two readings of certain referring expressions, noted by the philosopher Donnellan. See *referential/attributive distinction*.

There is also the traditional grammatical distinction between attributive and predicative placement of a modifier such as an adjective: for example 'The green book' ('green' is in attributive position); 'The book is green' (predicative position).

See also: interpretive use



## Behabitive

In Austin's classification of speech acts, behabitives are speech acts such as apologies, greetings, congratulations, criticisms and curses: all these are speech acts in which the speaker expresses an emotion or attitude, often towards the hearer. According to Austin, in making a behabitive speech act the speaker is 'reacting to other people's behaviours and fortunes'.

Roughly the same speech acts are classified as 'acknowledgements' by Bach and Harnish and 'expressives' in Searle's taxonomy.

See also: commissive, exercitive, expositive, verdictive, speech acts

## Bridging

When sentences are uttered in sequence, connections between the expressed contents are often inferred or assumed, on the basis of a presumption that they are parts of a coherent whole. For example, the following two-sentence sequence would usually be understood as in the italicized gloss underneath:

John went into the cafe. The waiter showed him to a table and gave him the menu.

*John went into the cafe. The waiter (i.e. one of the waiters at that cafe) showed him to a table and gave him the menu (for that cafe).*

This phenomenon is called 'bridging', a term coined by the psychologist Herbert Clark. If the extra information is seen as implicated by the speaker, then it is referred to as a 'bridging implicature'.

Bridging is limited by the accessibility of assumptions. If the gap is too large to be bridged, there is infelicity or oddness, as in this example:

?? John went to London. The waiter showed him to a table and gave him the menu.

## Broadening

This is a term used in lexical pragmatics for one way in which the meaning contributed by a word to the proposition expressed by an utterance can differ

from the lexically encoded meaning. Some words can be thought of as having extensions. The extension of a sense of a word is the set of objects that the word applies to. For example the extension of 'raw' is the set containing all and only uncooked things and the extension of 'hexagonal' is the set of hexagons.

In broadening, the contribution made by the word to the proposition expressed has a broader extension than the lexically encoded one. For example, in a hyperbolic utterance of 'This burger is raw' to convey that it is undercooked, the word 'raw' can be seen as conveying a less specific concept, whose extension includes very undercooked as well as literally raw items. Loose use, as in Austin's famous example, 'France is hexagonal,' can also be seen as broadening.

In relevance theory, broadening is thought to be involved in metaphor and the generic use of brand names like Kleenex as well as loose use and hyperbole.

Narrowing is the converse of broadening. Both are varieties of lexical modulation.

See also: lexical modulation, lexical pragmatics, narrowing

## Calculability

The property of conversational implicatures that they can be inferred logically from facts about the utterance, given pragmatic principles and knowledge of the context. This is the main difference between conversational and conventional implicatures: conversational implicatures must (in principle) be inferable, whereas conventional implicatures need not be inferred; they are carried by the use of certain expressions.

In Grice's system, conversational implicatures can be calculated from what is said and the way that it is said, given the context and background knowledge, on the assumption that the speaker intends to be cooperative and will therefore attempt to obey the conversational maxims, and on the further assumption that all of this information is available to both speaker and hearer.

See also: cancellability, non-detachability

## Cancellability

A property of conversational implicatures which helps to pick out what is conversationally implicated from other components of what is communicated. Cancellability (also called 'defeasibility') is the property that an implicature that would normally arise from saying a certain thing may be blocked or taken back. Implicatures can be cancelled in one of two ways: either *explicitly*, that is by the speaker denying in words what would otherwise be implicated, or *contextually*, that is by finding a situation in which uttering the same linguistic form would not give rise to the implicature.

Here is an example of explicit cancellation:

Amy: Would you like some whisky?

Bill: It tends to give me an awful hangover; but I don't mean that I am refusing the offer.

If there are generalized conversational implicatures (implicatures that normally arise from saying that *p*), then in special circumstances these implicatures may be blocked by the context. Assume for the sake of argument that utterances of sentences of the form 'Some Xs are Y' normally implicate that not all Xs are Y. In contexts in which it is clear that the speaker will not aim to be maximally informative, for example under cross-examination, the implicature may not arise.

## Cautious optimism

In relevance theory, cautious optimism is the second level of pragmatic development. A cautious optimist is cautious in that he proceeds as though he knows that speakers are not always competent – they do not express themselves as clearly or succinctly as they might. He is optimistic, though, in that he proceeds as though he did not know that speakers are not always benevolent – that they sometimes lie.

Given an utterance, a cautious optimist looks for an interpretation of an utterance that makes the utterance relevant to him and can then consider whether that interpretation could be the intended one. This is a move beyond naive optimism, but falls short of sophisticated understanding.

See also: naive optimism, relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure, sophisticated understanding

## Character/content distinction

Some words, such as ‘he’, ‘this’, and ‘tomorrow’, make a different contribution to the truth-conditions of utterances on each occasion of utterance, in virtue of their linguistic meaning. Their linguistic meaning can be seen as a rule that constrains the content of the proposition expressed.

In the terminology introduced by the philosopher of language and logician David Kaplan, the rule that constrains the contribution made by a word is often known as that word’s *character*; the contribution made (on a particular occasion) is the word’s *content*.

In Kaplan’s own theory, character plus context determines content, while content plus what Kaplan calls circumstances of evaluation determine the referent of an expression.

Context-sensitive expressions, including demonstratives and other indexicals, are those whose character delivers different content in different contexts.

See also: indexicality, procedural meaning

## Circumlocution

The use of a comparatively long or convoluted form of words to say something that could have been said more simply. This figure of speech is also called ‘periphrasis’.

In Grice's theory of conversation, circumlocutions are breaches of the manner maxim: *be brief*. Accordingly they can give rise to implicatures. Grice gives the example of an utterance of 'Miss X produced a series of sounds that corresponded closely with the score of *Home sweet home*,' implicating that the singing suffers from a hideous defect.

Circumlocutions are often made in order to avoid saying offensive words or spelling out something that the speaker judges best left unclear. No implicature need arise if the speaker has simply decided that greater brevity and clarity would be unwise, since then the speaker is unwilling to say more: in Gricean terms, not being fully cooperative.

See also: implicature, repetition

## Code model

A model of communication according to which communication involves the transmission of a meaning – the message – by encoding it in language or some other code. The idea is that the transmitter encodes and transmits the message as a linguistic signal, which the receiver then decodes.

According to the model, a coding/decoding process will lead to perfect transmission of the message if the code is shared, encoding and decoding are carried out successfully, and the signal is not degraded by noise or interrupted.

The terms message, signal, transmitter and receiver are from information theory, a twentieth century mathematical version of the code model, but the code model itself has been the default or 'common-sense' model of communication for much longer. As Sperber and Wilson pointed out, Grice's inferential theory of speaker meaning is a radical break with the code model and therefore from most previous work on communication.

In a code, the relationship between the signal and what it encodes is logically arbitrary. In this sense natural language is indeed a code: for example 'dog' only means a canine animal by convention – the sound-meaning link could not be deduced from first principles. Grice's innovation was to direct attention to the inferential aspects of communication.

See also: inferential model, message, signal

## Cognitive effects

In relevance theory, cognitive effects are the positive results in a cognitive system of processing an utterance or other stimulus. Processing is always

performed in a context, so cognitive effects and contextual effects are identical and the two terms are used interchangeably.

There are three types of cognitive effects:

- (1) to support and strengthen an existing assumption;
- (2) to contradict and rule out an existing assumption;
- (3) to interact inferentially with existing assumptions to produce a new conclusion.

Cognitive effects are one component of the definition of relevance: the greater the cognitive effects of a stimulus, the more relevant it is.

See also: contextual effects, relevance

## Cognitive environment

In relevance theory, the cognitive environment of an individual is the set of thoughts that he could entertain as true at that time. That is, in relevance-theoretic terminology, the cognitive environment of an individual at a certain time is the set of assumptions that are manifest to him.

See also: manifestness

## Cognitive linguistics

A tendency or school within linguistics which is characterized by two main assumptions: first, that there is no separate language faculty, that is, no special mental architecture for linguistic abilities; and secondly that semantic aspects of language drive its syntax. Cognitive linguistics developed partly from the generative semantics research programme in the late 1970s and 1980s, and inherits some of its assumptions.

Well-known cognitive linguists who have worked on meaning and communication include Gilles Fauconnier, Ray Gibbs, George Lakoff, Ronald Langacker and Mark Turner.

From the point of view of pragmatics a key assumption of cognitive linguistics is that language is driven by semantic needs: 'language is in the service of constructing and communicating meaning' (Fauconnier). This is a form of functionalism about language, although it differs from a traditional conception of functionalism, according to which the role of language is to allow the communication of thoughts. For cognitive linguists, language and the way we think are not to be artificially separated, and the study of language

is expected to yield insights into cognition in general: 'language is a window into the mind' (Fauconnier again). For example, on this view, rhetorical figures such as metaphor and metonymy are not to be understood primarily as ways of getting our ideas across, but rather as a reflection of how our thoughts are actually structured. Thus cognitive linguistics has an affinity with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, according to which the language we speak influences or determines the way we think, although a cognitive linguist might prefer to say that language evokes, depends on and reveals our mental resources.

The name 'cognitive linguistics' should not be taken to suggest that only cognitive linguists examine the cognitive basis of language and language use. The cognitive linguistics research programme is part of a general turn towards cognitive science in linguistics, in common with several schools of linguistics and pragmatics that it opposes. Noam Chomsky's programme in linguistics (against which cognitive linguistics is explicitly a reaction) has always been cognitivist in this sense. In pragmatics, relevance theorists and others work on the assumption that human cognition has specializations for communication or language use. One respect in which cognitive linguists differ from many other linguists and pragmatic theorists is that they do not make sharp distinctions between language and its uses, or between semantics and pragmatics.

In the area of semantics and pragmatics, cognitive linguists tend to subscribe to some form of the thesis of the underspecification of linguistic meaning (although not generally under that name). They are not interested in giving an account of utterance meaning in terms of truth conditions, and unlike Griceans and relevance theorists they generally do not draw a distinction between explicit and implicit aspects of what is communicated by an utterance. What interests cognitive linguists here is what Fauconnier calls the *economy* of language in context. Comparatively simple linguistic forms evoke, in use, sophisticated, complex, detailed mental models. These models carry a great deal more information than the linguistic forms themselves: according to cognitive linguistics, meaning is not mainly (or not at all) in the words or the grammatical structures, but in our constructive response to language in context. In that respect the linguistic forms underspecify these conceptual models and in general terms language underspecifies meaning.

Part of the reason why cognitive linguists do not generally analyse meaning in terms of truth-conditions is that they are interested in giving a finer-grained analysis. For example, why is example A preferable to example B, given that they are both true?

A: He put the hat on his head.

?? B: He put his head in the hat.

The contrast between the two sentences above concerning the hat might be explained in terms of landmark and trajector (in Langacker's terminology). The claim is that it is natural to model the person – and his head – as a static thing (landmark) relative to which another thing, the hat (a trajector) moves. Rules are hard to state, however, since there are many exceptions. These two sentences are both acceptable, for example:

A: He put the shoe on his foot.

B: He put his foot in the shoe.

Cognitive linguistics is in some ways a more ambitious programme than generative linguistics or Gricean pragmatics. As noted above, cognitive linguists want to be able to explain why a speaker chooses one way of saying something rather than another way and they work on the presumption that facts about use will shed light on meaning, on linguistic structure and on mental structure.

Perhaps of most interest to pragmatics is the claim that metaphor and metonymy are not merely figures of speech but that each is a linguistic reflex of a fundamental tendency of thought. Metaphor is seen as a natural expression of 'domain mapping': the cognitive tendency to think of ('conceptualize') one area of life ('domain') in terms of another, carrying across some of the properties of one domain to the other. For example, emotions can be thought of in terms of temperature and heat: 'She is hot-tempered,' 'John is an iceberg.' Other mappings that have been investigated include: *life is a journey*, *love is a journey*, *height is status*, *categories are containers* and *time passing is motion*. As well as this claim about cognition, the further claim is made that the distinction between literal and metaphorical speech is untenable as it is traditionally conceived. Metaphor is said to go well beyond typical poetic examples. On this account, the stable lexicon is also shot through with metaphor.

This account of metaphor has received a great deal of attention and has become influential beyond cognitive linguistics. In recent years metonymy has also come under the spotlight as a pervasive feature of language and language use. It is explained in cognitive linguistics as a reflex of a fundamental cognitive tendency to conceptualize a complex entity in terms of one of its properties.



This work on the cognitive basis of metaphor and metonymy exemplifies the way that cognitive linguistics has been occupied with finding principles of thought and mechanisms of cognition that are non-inferential, or at least that are not captured by classical logic.

See also: functionalism, metaphor, metonymy

## Cognitive Principle of Relevance

One of the two main postulates of relevance theory, the Cognitive Principle is the hypothesis that human cognition tends to maximize relevance. This is a general claim, intended to apply to all areas of cognition, including inference, memory and attention, as well as to utterance interpretation. Since relevance is greater when the cognitive pay-off of processing an input is greater, and greater when the cost of processing is less, the cognitive principle is an efficiency principle.

The picture is of people as information-foragers: beings that have evolved so that they seek out and pay attention to the most relevant stimuli and process them so as to extract the maximum cognitive nutrition. The relevance of this picture for pragmatics is spelled out in the Communicative Principle of Relevance and the presumption of optimal relevance.

See also: cognitive effects, Communicative Principle of Relevance, processing effort, relevance

## Commissive

In Austin's classification of speech acts, commissives are the class of speech acts which involve the speaker promising or otherwise making a commitment. Examples include vowing to give up smoking, promising to attend a party, making the vows required to enter a religious order, taking the Hippocratic Oath, and taking the marriage vow.

Commissives are also a type of speech act in Searle's taxonomy: speech acts that involve commitment to a future course of action. They are analysed as having world-to-word direction of fit. The idea is that when uttering a commissive, the speaker intends to (try to) make the world conform to what she has said.

See also: behabitive, exercitive, expositive, verdictive, speech acts

## Common ground

Background information that is taken for granted or presupposed in making a speech act. The term comes from Robert Stalnaker's work on assertions and is widely used in formal pragmatics and philosophy of language.

The common ground is formalized as a set of possible worlds, that is, formally, the set of all possible worlds in each of which all of the propositions in the common ground are true. Less formally: the set of possible words which are compatible with the background information.

'Common ground' is sometimes used loosely as a synonym for context but the common ground is better seen as a particular version of the idea of context. The common ground differs from cognitivist notions of context, for example, since it cannot contain propositions which are logically inconsistent.

See also: context

## Communicative competence

The ability to communicate in a language. Communicative competence includes competence with the grammatical forms of the language and the ability to put forms of the language to use in communication. This term was invented by the anthropologist and sociolinguist Dell Hymes.

Now a popular notion in applied linguistics and language teaching, where the aim is to teach not just grammar and speech sounds, but also strategies for communicating in that language. This teaching tends not so much to be concerned with pragmatics in a narrow sense (implicatures, reference assignment etc.) as with teaching social conventions about how the language is used.

See also: competence/performance distinction

## Communicative intention

In relevance theory, the communicative intention is one of two speaker intentions that go with an utterance. There is the informative intention: the speaker's intention to convey something to the hearer. In addition, in overt ostensive communication, the speaker has the intention that the hearer recognize his informative intention. This higher-order intention is the communicative intention.

The idea is that in successful ostensive communication the hearer does not just come to have a particular thought or thought, but recognizes that the speaker wanted to convey those thoughts.

The communicative intention corresponds to the second clause in Grice's definition of speaker meaning or nonnatural meaning.

See also: informative intention

## **Communicative presumption**

The presumption that the speaker is in fact communicating, so that there is a locutionary act and an illocutionary act: the speaker meant something, and her utterance had a certain illocutionary force. The term is from the work of Bach and Harnish, who attempt to integrate a Gricean, inferential model of communication with the speech-act framework. The idea is that the presumption is necessary first because the words uttered underdetermine the proposition expressed, and secondly, since there is no one-to-one mapping between linguistic form and illocutionary force, the words uttered do not determine the illocutionary act. The hearer proceeds on the presumption that there is a locutionary act and an illocutionary act to be found.

See also: Speech Act Schema

## **Communicative Principle of Relevance**

One of two central principles of relevance theory (the other is the Cognitive Principle of Relevance). The Communicative (or Second) Principle of Relevance is the claim that each utterance (or other ostensive stimulus) raises a presumption of its own optimal relevance, namely that the speaker will have made her utterance as relevant as possible (allowing for her abilities and preferences).

The Communicative Principle is claimed to licence the relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure. Because each utterance can be expected to be as easy to understand as the speaker was able (and willing) to make it, then, first, a least-effort path can be followed in utterance interpretation, and secondly, it will be worth processing until an interpretation is found that fulfils the hearer's expectations of relevance. The Communicative Principle underlies all work done in relevance theory on overt communication.

The Communicative Principle does not apply to other areas of cognition such as memory, inference and attention. These are claimed to fall under the Cognitive Principle.

See also: presumption of optimal relevance

## Competence/performance distinction

The competence/performance distinction is central to work in generative grammar on the language faculty, although it has been controversial since Chomsky introduced it. The idea is that it is necessary to distinguish between the body of knowledge of grammatical principles possessed by a competent speaker of a language, and the ability to use that grammatical knowledge. Performance may be diminished by various factors such as tiredness or drunkenness that are external to the speaker's language abilities themselves.

It is still more controversial how the distinction applies to pragmatic abilities. Some pragmatic theorists are explicit in claiming that pragmatic ability is due to performance systems and that there is no body of mentally represented knowledge beyond grammatical competence which is specific to utterance interpretation. For example, in relevance theory, it is claimed that the Communicative Principle of Relevance is not mentally represented. Rather it is a scientific hypothesis about communication, not a part of a body of knowledge that an individual needs in order to communicate. Chomsky has suggested that aspects of pragmatic ability are due to mentally represented pragmatic principles, that is that there is a pragmatic competence.

## Compositionality

The principle that the meaning of a phrase (or sentence) depends only on the meanings of the parts (words, morphemes) and the way that they are put together. More succinctly: the meaning of an expression is a function of the meanings of its parts and the way in which they are combined. It is often argued that only a compositional theory can account for *productivity*: the fact that speakers can produce an unlimited number of well-formed sentences.

Compositionality is effectively a constraint on the mapping between syntax and semantics. It can be implemented as a requirement that for each syntactic rule that combines elements there is a corresponding semantic rule that combines their meanings.

Pragmatic effects on the proposition expressed (including enrichment and lexical modulation) have been seen as a threat to compositionality, although it is compatible with the letter (but perhaps not the spirit) of the definition that the meanings of parts or the rules for combining meanings might be context-sensitive. It is in any case unclear whether compositionality, a syntactic/semantic principle, makes sense as a constraint on speaker meaning.

See also: proposition expressed, semantic innocence

## Concept

The term 'concept' is used in psychology, philosophy and linguistics. A concept is an idea of a certain class of objects. What do recognizing a cat, thinking about cats and talking about cats have in common? A possible, but rather vague answer is that they all involve one concept, the cat concept, conventionally written 'CAT'.

To think of two objects as being the same type of thing is to categorize them under the same concept. For example, Fido and Spot are both dogs: they are both categorized as falling under the concept DOG.

Concepts can be seen as mental entities, or as more abstract and mind-external. In cognitive science, concepts are seen as mental addresses for stored information. Use of a word that encodes a concept, or perception of an entity that falls under a concept, makes accessible the information associated with that concept. For example, seeing a cat or hearing the word 'cat' raises the accessibility of whatever information the individual has stored about cats, which might include *cats are mammals*, *cats like milk* and *the ancient Egyptians loved cats*.

On the assumption that words encode concepts, in principle the same concept can be encoded by different words, both within a language, and across languages, for example 'cat' in English and 'chat' in French, just as sentences in different languages can express the same proposition. As words (or lexical items) are the components of sentences, so concepts are the components of propositions.

Not all concepts are lexicalized. There is no word or morpheme in English that means ‘things that would hurt you if they fell on your head’, but that phrase describes a thinkable concept. Whether all thinkable concepts can be expressed linguistically and whether all words express concepts are both controversial questions.

See also: ad hoc concepts, conceptual meaning, effability, procedural meaning, proposition

## Conceptual meaning

In relevance theory a distinction is drawn between conceptual and procedural meaning. The claim is that items in a language may encode either sort of meaning or both. Conceptual meaning corresponds to the traditional account of word meaning, according to which each word encodes a concept and contributes that concept to the meaning of a sentence or utterance it figures in. So ‘cat’ encodes the concept CAT and ‘intelligent’ encodes the concept INTELLIGENT, and it is no coincidence that the meaning of ‘Your cat is intelligent’ includes these concepts.

Some words are argued to have little or no conceptual meaning, for example discourse connectives like ‘so’ and pronouns like ‘she’. Other words might encode both conceptual and procedural meaning, for example ‘but’.

See also: procedural meaning

## Constative

In Austin’s work on speech acts, the term ‘constative’ is defined in contrast to the term ‘performative’. The idea is that if some utterances play the traditional role of simply providing descriptions of states of affairs then they should be called constatives. This definition was made in the context of interest in performative utterances: utterances that change the world, rather than describing it, for example, ‘I name this ship *The Golden Hind*.’ The distinction rests on the idea that performatives have felicity conditions, that is, conditions under which the act comes off successfully, whereas constatives would have traditional truth conditions.

In speech-act theory it is generally considered that there are no constatives; all utterances are analysed as performatives.

See also: felicity conditions, performative, speech acts, truth conditions

## Content

A technical term from philosophy, with very broad application. Content is the representational aspect of mental states and of speech acts. The content of some mental states is propositional. For example, the content of a belief that humans are descended from apes is the proposition that humans are descended from apes. The term 'content' is a name for something this belief has in common with the fear that humans are descended from apes, the hope that humans are descended from apes etc. The idea is that the content of a mental state can be separated from the kind of mental state it is.

Given that utterances can be used to convey propositions, it is also possible to talk of the truth-conditional content of an utterance, by which is meant the proposition expressed by the utterance. This is to be distinguished from the force of the utterance: whether it is an assertion, a question, an order etc. It is often assumed that utterances and mental states may share content, so that Anne can assert what Betty hopes and so on.

Exclamatory utterances such as 'Wow!', 'Ouch!', and perhaps 'Hello' and 'Goodbye' are sometimes said to have expressive content.

See also: proposition

## Context

The context of an utterance is a source of clues that aid the hearer in working out what the speaker intended to convey. If the interpretation of utterances could only take into account the context-independent properties of the words and gestures uttered, it would not be possible to work out the implicatures of an utterance and in many cases it would not be possible to work out the proposition expressed or the intended illocutionary force.

Since pragmatics deals with speaker meaning or what is communicated, and how the hearer works this out, context is central to pragmatics. Indeed, one popular way to define pragmatics is by drawing a distinction between semantics and pragmatics on the basis of context: semantics studies context-invariant meaning, while pragmatics is concerned with the way meaning depends on context.

The context of an utterance is often thought of as everything that is available to be brought to bear on the utterance's interpretation, except the form and content of the phrase or sentence uttered (and any conventional meaning attached to gestures used). So stated, the notion of context remains

hard to pin down. What is the extent of the context of an utterance? Consider the task of assigning a referent to an occurrence of a pronoun in an utterance: for example, an utterance of 'He's here.' The speaker might be pointing at a person, or the utterance might be understood in some other way as referring to someone in the immediate physical environment. So the context of an utterance must include facts about the immediate physical environment. That is not all, however. An utterance can pick out a referent mentioned in previous discourse. For example, one person expresses her admiration for Noam Chomsky, and another utters 'He's coming to Europe next year' as a reply. Here the individual Noam Chomsky is available to be the referent of 'he' through having been mentioned in the discourse prior to the utterance in question.

So the context must include both information about the physical environment and information about the prior discourse (and in some cases, particularly interpretation of literary texts, subsequent discourse must also be taken into account). Sometimes the notion of context is divided into (physical) context and 'co-text' to mark the distinction between the two sources of information. In any case, some theorists stop at this characterization of context: an externalist conception in that it does not attempt to take into account what speaker and hearer know or believe.

However, the context must also include facts about the speaker's and hearer's beliefs, opinions, habits and so on. This can be seen clearly in the recovery of implicatures, although it applies elsewhere too. Consider a speaker who says, ironically, 'Things are improving in the Middle East, I see.' For the hearer to recover the speaker's intended interpretation, he has to realize that the utterance was meant ironically, and to do that he has to draw on assumptions about the speaker's beliefs and attitudes, as well as about the news from the Middle East, since some people could sincerely utter that sentence (no matter how bad the recent news might seem to the hearer herself), and the hearer has to determine whether that is what the speaker is doing.

Similar considerations apply to the assignment of reference to pronouns, required to work out what proposition is expressed. For example, suppose that Peter sees Mary looking unhappy and says:

He'll be back next week.

Peter was intending to refer to John, Mary's husband, who is in hospital. He is not present in the physical context and may not have been mentioned in any prior discourse. If Mary knows or can work out that Peter knows that



John is away then she may be able to work out that it is John that he is referring to.

It might seem that a notion of context which includes the physical environment, the discourse and the knowledge and beliefs of speaker and hearer will have to be alarmingly broad. However, a principled limit can be drawn, based on the observation that the speaker cannot draw on information that she does not have access to, and that she must also take into account what information the hearer can access. For example, in uses of language that are intended to be communicative, the speaker can only successfully refer to a person using a pronoun such as 'he' if the hearer is able to infer who the intended referent is. Communication is not likely to be successful, for example, if, while conducting a conversation about Larry Horn, the speaker says aloud 'He's coming to Europe next year,' wanting to refer to Noam Chomsky.

Such considerations might suggest that the correct notion of context is the knowledge or beliefs that the speaker and hearer share. Elaborate examples have been constructed in an attempt to show that anything short of full mutual knowledge is too weak, where mutual knowledge of a piece of information  $p$  is defined as follows for a speaker  $S$  and a hearer  $H$ :

$S$  knows  $p$   
 $H$  knows  $p$   
 $S$  knows that  $H$  knows  $p$   
 $H$  knows that  $S$  knows  $p$   
 $S$  knows that  $H$  knows that  $S$  knows  $p$   
 and so on . . .

The idea here is that if full mutual knowledge does not obtain, communication may fail, since at some level the speaker and hearer may fail to coordinate on the intended interpretation. The argument is that to be sure of successful communication the speaker should only draw on information that she and the hearer both know. But this means that she can only use information that (a) she knows and (b) she knows that the hearer knows. But to be sure of successful communication, the hearer must know which information the speaker is able to draw on, so he must know what she knows that he knows. This line of argument can be extended indefinitely.

Against this argument, it has been pointed out that mutual knowledge is a psychologically implausible requirement, and that in any case it is certainly possible in successful communication for the speaker to make use

of a piece of information that is not known to the hearer before the utterance. Sperber and Wilson give an example. Mary and Peter are looking at a landscape and Mary notices a distant church. She says 'I've been inside that church.' It is not necessary for Peter to know in advance that the tower on the horizon is the spire of a church. He does not even need to have noticed that there is a building there. In making her remark, Mary does not need to consider any of this. She just has to be reasonably confident that Peter will be able to recognize the church when she makes her utterance.

There has been debate about whether the context in which an utterance is interpreted is changed by the utterance itself. On the basis of examples such as the one just discussed, there is fairly broad recent consensus that 'understanding pragmatic meanings is always a case of identifying a context that will make sense of the utterance' as Grundy writes. This idea is a cornerstone of Sperber and Wilson's relevance-theoretic approach to pragmatics, in which any information that is 'manifest' (perceivable or thinkable, roughly) can be drawn upon. It has also become the predominant view in more sociologically oriented work including Conversation Analysis. In the early 1990s, theorists including Duranti and Goodwin and Schegloff advocated abandoning the earlier 'bucket' theory of context according to which a pre-existing social framework contains everything the participants could do and say. Instead it is now generally thought that participants create contexts through their speech acts. Sometimes a distinction is made in this tradition between micro-context, the context created by the conversation, and macro-context, the elements of the overall context which come from outside of the conversation.

In formal pragmatics and philosophy of language, context is often treated as a set of logically consistent propositions, the so-called *common ground*. An assertive utterance changes the common ground by ruling out of it all propositions that are incompatible with the proposition expressed by the utterance. If the necessary assumptions for understanding an utterance are not available in the common ground before the utterance is made, as in the church example above, these assumptions may be added in order to process the utterance. This is called *accommodation*. This approach treats such examples as falling to some extent outside the norms of smooth communication, although it is acknowledged that the phenomenon is common.

The view that the interaction between context and linguistic meaning is exclusively pragmatic has been challenged. Kent Bach makes a distinction

between broad context and narrow context. Narrow context is a part of the overall context that determines the referents of all indexical terms. Broad context is all of the contextual information that is relevant to working out what the speaker intended to communicate. The idea is that only part of the overall context is relevant to what is said, which Bach sees as a semantic level of meaning. This move may be useful as a way of (temporarily) abstracting away from the messiness of pragmatics – and reality – but it does not affect the fact that assigning referents to indexicals, like implicature derivation, involves working out the speaker's intentions: an inferential task that is sensitive in principle to any information in (broad) context.

See also: accommodation, common ground, manifestness, mutual knowledge

## Contextual effects

In relevance theory, contextual effects are the positive results of an utterance or other stimulus when it is processed in a particular context. Given that processing is performed by a cognitive system, contextual effects are identical to cognitive effects and the two terms are used interchangeably.

There are three types of contextual effects:

- (1) to support and strengthen an existing assumption;
- (2) to contradict and thereby eliminate an existing assumption;
- (3) to interact inferentially with existing assumptions to produce a new conclusion.

See also: cognitive effects

## Conventional implicature

This is a technical term for a communicated implication of an utterance (i.e. an implicature) that arises from the linguistic meaning of a linguistic item or items. Conventional implicatures are in opposition to *conversational* implicatures, which are inferred, rather than coming directly from the meaning of particular words.

Some words carry meaning that does not contribute to the truth-conditions of utterances that include them, as noted by Paul Grice (and previously by Gottlob Frege). Compare these two sentences:

John lives in London and Mary lives in Oxford.

John lives in London but Mary lives in Oxford.

Both sentences are true if and only if John lives in London and Mary lives in Oxford: they have the same truth conditions. Intuitively, however, they differ in meaning.

This non-truth-conditional difference in meaning is not easy to summarize exactly. We can say that for a speaker to felicitously utter the second sentence, she must intend to communicate that there is something unexpected about the fact that Mary lives in Oxford, given that John lives in London. If the speaker and hearer know that John and Mary are married, for example, then it could be felicitous to utter the sentence, since there is a standing assumption that couples live together.

Grice proposed that this type of non-truth-conditional meaning is a conventional implicature: 'conventional' because it is part of the timeless (i.e. linguistic) meaning of a word, and 'implicature' because it does not contribute to what is said. Another way that Grice put this was to say that conventional implicatures are part of formal content (content due to timeless meaning, i.e. linguistically encoded meaning) but not part of dictive content (what is said).

So conventional implicatures are not integrated into truth-conditional content. If no contrast was intended between the fact that John lives in London and the fact that Mary lives in Oxford it would be strange and misleading to utter 'John lives in London but Mary lives in Oxford', but the utterance would not thereby be false.

It is generally thought that conventional implicatures, unlike conversational implicatures, are not calculable. Being conventional, they cannot be worked out inferentially from what is said. Sentences conjoined with 'and' and 'but' like the examples above are the same at Grice's level of what is said: they have the same truth-conditions. So if the conventional implicature cannot be inferred from what is said by the sentence with 'and', it cannot be inferred from what is said by the sentence with 'but'.

For the same reason, conventional implicatures, unlike conversational implicatures, are detachable. Take an utterance that has a conventional implicature. An utterance in the same context of a sentence with the same truth-conditions might not have given rise to the conventional implicature, since it might not have contained the word that gives rise to the implicature. The sentences above with 'and' and 'but' have the same

truth-conditions, but only the one with 'but' carries the conventional implicature of unexpectedness.

Conventional implicatures are apparently not cancellable, again differing from conversational implicatures. It is strange to say:

?? John lives in London but Mary lives in Oxford and I don't mean to imply that there is any contrast between those two facts.

Equally, conventional implicatures cannot be cancelled by the context. In all contexts, use of the word 'but' conveys that there is a contrast of some kind. Compare this with use of the word 'some', which very often, but not always, conveys 'not all'.

Thus non-cancellability helps to distinguish sharply between conventional implicatures and generalized conversational implicatures. They are otherwise somewhat similar in that, while they are inferred, not decoded, generalized conversational implicatures can be seen as arising from the meanings of particular linguistic items or constructions and are also not part of what is said.

The notion of conventional implicature is one of the standard tools of formal pragmatics. However, it has always been controversial whether pragmatic theory needs the extra level of speaker meaning or communicated content provided by the notion of conventional implicature. Grice himself was not entirely comfortable with it, saying that 'the nature of conventional implicature needs to be examined before any free use of it, for explanatory purposes, can be indulged in.' The best-known criticisms come from Sperber and Wilson and, separately, Kent Bach (in an article entitled 'The myth of conventional implicatures').

As noted above, conventional implicatures (by definition) do not contribute to what is said. But according to Bach, some content usually described as carried by conventional implicatures is asserted (in assertive utterances) just as much as content that is uncontroversially part of the proposition expressed. One suggested test of this is that the lexical items that are said to carry conventional implicatures can be used in reported speech, as here, for example:

A: John likes nuts although they are bad for you.

B: A said that John likes nuts although they are bad for you.

This test is by no means conclusive, but Bach also provides a number of other reasons to doubt the need for an extra level of meaning.

Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory does not make use of conventional implicature. Relevance theory distinguishes between truth-conditional and non-truth-conditional meaning and between representational and procedural (non-representational) meaning. The meanings of items such as 'although', 'but' and 'therefore' may be analysed as both non-truth-conditional and procedural.

In contrast, Grice's conventional implicatures are representational. Like conversational implicatures (and what is said), they have truth-conditions, although neither type of implicature contributes to the truth-conditions of the utterance. The alternative, procedural, account is that the non-truth-conditional contribution of (e.g.) 'but' is to constrain the way that an utterance is processed, so that (for example) different conversational implicatures may be reached from those that would have been derived if the utterance had contained 'and' instead.

See also: implicature, non-truth-conditional meaning

## Conversational maxims

The conversational maxims are a central part of Grice's theory of conversation. According to the theory, the maxims are rules or principles which interlocutors should observe in conversation and which can give rise to implicatures. The claim is that a rational speaker in a conversation will try to be cooperative, and, other things being equal, this will involve obeying the maxims.

A hearer can therefore expect a speaker to conform to the maxims unless there is a good reason for not doing so. As a result, both apparent and real violations of the maxims can be used to indicate that the speaker meant more than she said, that is, to convey an implicature. Implicatures can be worked out by the hearer on the assumption that the maxims or at least the Cooperative Principle are being observed at some level.

Grice grouped the maxims in four categories: *quality*, *quantity*, *relation* and *manner*, as follows:

### Quantity

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

## Quality

Supermaxim: Try to make your contribution one that is true.

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

## Relation

Be relevant

## Manner

Supermaxim: Be perspicuous.

1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
4. Be orderly.

Grice makes a comparison between a conversation and other cooperative endeavours such as working together to mend a car. Quite a close parallel can be drawn. If the person working on the engine clearly needs a screwdriver, he would not expect to be given a hammer (a matter of relevance to the task at hand), or 20 screwdrivers (c.f. first maxim of quantity), or half of one (c.f. second maxim of quantity and perhaps quality maxims), or an extremely fragile or trick rubber screwdriver (c.f. quality maxims).

In fact the conversational maxims are only one application of the view (which Grice subscribed to) that there are various aesthetic, social and moral maxims governing behaviour. Specifically, Grice mentions a politeness maxim which would clearly affect both communicative and non-communicative behaviour.

The term 'maxim' was adopted from Kant, who meant much the same by it as Grice – a principle that motivates an agent to act; a reason for acting in a certain way – but in the moral realm. The humorous but serious reference to Kant and Aristotle (the categories that the maxims are divided into echo both) and the little jokes in the phrasing of the maxims (the choice of words in the supermaxim of manner and the third manner maxim are deliberate self-violations) are typical of Grice's style of philosophy.

The maxims were intended to explain how speakers can mean more than they say, or even something different from it, and how hearers can work out

what was meant beyond what the speaker's words mean. That is, they are intended as an answer to the questions: how do implicatures arise and how do hearers grasp them? There are at least three different ways that the maxims can give rise to implicatures, listed here:

**1. Conformance to the maxims, including apparent violations.** An implicature may arise when the speaker does not violate any maxim, although perhaps seems to do so at the level of what is said.

For example, a remark that would be irrelevant if taken only at the level of what is said, may be taken to be complying with the maxim of relation if what it implicates is relevant, as in B's remark below:

A: Smith doesn't seem to have a girlfriend these days.

B: He has been paying a lot of visits to New York lately.

B's remark would not be cooperative if it were not relevant in some way and it would not be relevant unless B meant to suggest that A has (or might have) a girlfriend in New York, so this is what it implicates.

**2. Clash between maxims.** Two or more maxims may clash in that they recommend different courses of behaviour. For example, a speaker trying to be as informative as required for the current purposes of the exchange (first quality maxim) ought to answer direct questions. However, if she does not know the answer then giving a full and precise answer would contravene one or both of the quality maxims. In such cases, quality almost always trumps quantity, and the speaker makes a vague or general statement, as in Grice's famous example:

A: Where does C live?

B: Somewhere in the south of France.

Here B implicates that she does not know where exactly C lives.

**3. Flouting.** Blatant, overt violations of one or more maxims are known as flouting. Flouting gives rise to implicatures by means of *exploitation*. Although a maxim is violated at the level of what is said, the Cooperative Principle is assumed to be in operation as usual (and perhaps some maxims too). If the speaker is trying to be cooperative then (the hearer may reason) she must have had a reason for the maxim-violation, namely to convey a certain implicature.



For example, an ironic utterance of 'It's lovely weather for June,' said as rain gives way to freezing sleet, is a blatant violation of the first quality maxim: Do not say what you believe to be false. The hearer, assuming that the speaker is attempting to be cooperative at some level, may infer that she has implicated something that is true, namely the opposite of what she seemed to be saying (Grice adopts here the classical definition of irony), that is something along the lines of 'It's horrible weather for June.'

This account is extended to several other figures of speech, including metaphor, understatement and hyperbole, all treated as floutings of the first maxim of quality. Floutings of other maxims carry different sorts of implicatures. Grice gives the example of an utterance of 'Miss X produced a series of sounds that corresponded closely with the score of *Home sweet home*,' a blatant violation of the third manner maxim, 'Be brief,' given that the speaker could have said 'Miss X sang *Home sweet home*.' In using the longer formulation, the speaker implicates that there was something terribly wrong with Miss X's rendition.

**Covert violation.** In addition, a speaker can covertly violate a maxim or opt out of the Cooperative Principle and maxims altogether. An example of covert violation is lying, which involves covert violation of the first quality maxim. No implicature results, since (a) if the hearer does not notice that the speaker is lying the utterance seems to be a normal assertion, and (b) if the lie is detected, the hearer realizes that the speaker did not intend the violation to be noticed, and therefore cannot have intended to exploit the violation to generate an implicature, thus cannot have intended to convey an implicature.

**Opting-out.** Grice also mentions the possibility of opting-out entirely from a maxim and the Cooperative Principle. Saying 'I cannot say more; my lips are sealed' or simply 'No comment' opts out of the CP and the first maxim of quantity, usually temporarily and only on a particular subject. No implicature arises: once the Cooperative Principle has been suspended the hearer cannot take it for granted that any apparent or real violation of a maxim is intended to steer him to an implicature. It has been argued that a logical consequence is that in the framework of the CP and maxims it is in principle not possible for a speaker to implicate that she is unwilling to say more. This has been seen as problematic for the theory.

It has been argued that hedging in conversation is something like a milder variant of opting-out, giving advance notice that one knows or suspects that

one's contribution will not meet the standards set by one or more of the maxims – and perhaps preventing the hearer from attempting to preserve the assumption of cooperation by hypothesizing (unintended) implicatures. For example, one can hedge about informativeness, 'I can't tell you as much as I would like to, but here's what I *can* say . . .', or the second quality maxim, 'I don't know this for certain, but I suspect that . . .', relevance, 'Not quite on the subject, . . .' and manner maxims, 'This probably isn't a good way to say this but . . .'. When hedging is analysed this way, these devices are called *maxim hedges*.

The maxims have been challenged on several grounds. It has been argued (a) that the maxims proposed are culturally specific rather than universal; (b) that the maxims proposed are not the right ones on empirical grounds; (c) that there are too many maxims and that they should be reduced to two or three tendencies or principles; and (d) there is no need for maxims at all.

Some critics have thought that the maxims are too culturally specific, at least in the form they are presented by Grice: specific to English, Anglophone or Western culture or even, perhaps, to academic culture. Part of what is behind this criticism is the thought that it is ridiculous for Grice (envisaged as sitting in an armchair in a Senior Common Room in Oxford) to imagine that he can come up with rules for good conversational practice that apply to cultures very different from his own.

The anthropologist Elinor Keenan claimed that in Malagasy culture the first maxim of quantity is not present. Her evidence is that there are many utterances which are underinformative which do not give rise to any implicature as a result. These utterances are underinformative because of taboos against giving away too much information, or information that is too specific. So a boy asked where his mother is, and knowing that she is at home, might say the Malagasy equivalent of 'She is either at home or at the market,' for example. No implicature arises that the boy does not know where she is. However Keenan's argument is too strong to be correct. It would also establish that the maxim does not apply in Western culture, since in a guessing game a speaker may say for example 'The sweet is in my left hand or in my right hand,' with no implicature arising that she does not know which.

In the framework of the CP and maxims, an intention to convey an implicature is one possible reason for a violation of a maxim, but there are other reasons, which might include taboos or the desire to keep your audience

guessing. So a hearer is only justified in inferring an implicature from a maxim violation if another such explanation would not be better.

The suggestion that the maxims are culturally specific is clearly one that Grice would have resisted on general grounds. Grice thought that the source of the maxims was rationality. The idea is that as rational beings engaged in conversation, with the typical conversational aims of communicating, influencing others and so on, there are certain rules (or rules of thumb) that it is reasonable or rational for us to follow: the maxims. Grice said that he would like to show how exactly the maxims he proposed followed from general considerations of rationality, but did not know how to do so. At any rate, on the view that the maxims are a consequence (or a condition) of rationality they must be more or less culturally universal.

A question that has been raised many times is whether the maxims Grice proposed are the right ones. Certainly, Grice was not wedded to the maxims in the form that he presented them. In introducing them, Grice suggested that more might be needed, and that he was not sure that the second maxim of quality was necessary given that its effects might also be secured by the operation of the maxim of relation. The formulation of that maxim, 'Be relevant,' also troubled him, concealing 'a number of problems' with its 'terse-ness'. Later, Grice suggested adding a further maxim of manner: 'Facilitate in your form of expression the appropriate reply.'

As mentioned above, Grice also suggested that there are non-conversational maxims including a maxim or maxims of politeness. The linguist Geoffrey Leech proposed a principle and maxims of politeness under six categories including tact, generosity and sympathy.

Several frameworks have tried to reduce the number of pragmatic principles. The best known are the neo-Gricean theories of Larry Horn and Stephen Levinson, and Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory. Horn reduces the maxims (apart from the maxims of quality) to two opposing but complementary principles: the Q-principle ('Say as much as you can') and the R-principle ('Say no more than you must'). Levinson has a three-way distinction between appropriateness of manner (his M-principle), and two principles of informativeness (his R- and I-principles).

Relevance theory is more reductionist in that it proposes that communication is governed by a unitary principle of relevance. However the theory's concept of relevance is itself a cost-benefit trade-off. This proposal differs from frameworks with maxims in that the principle is not postulated to be

something that speakers or hearers bear in mind or that they should follow: it is descriptive, not normative.

See also: implicature, Cooperative Principle, exploitation, hedge, implicature, irony, metaphor

## **Conversation Analysis**

Conversation Analysis, or, as it is also known, the study of *talk-in-interaction*, is one approach to the study of conversation. It involves detailed examination of naturally produced samples of language in use. Conversation analysts typically work with field recordings of conversational exchanges, which they transcribe and analyse in great detail, looking for the conversational structure and conversational methods in the data.

The aim is to catalogue and understand the repertoire of members of a speech community for the organization of talk: to understand such things as how they start and end conversations, how they take turns in conversation, how they agree on a topic, and how they change it. An extensive system of classification for acts in conversation has been developed, with its own theoretical vocabulary, for example: turn, overlap, backchannel, adjacency pair, repair, pre-sequence, insertion sequence.

The pioneers of this field, Harvey Sacks and his colleagues, including Gail Jefferson and Emanuel Schegloff, were sociologists convinced that talk exchanges have structure that can be studied systematically. Their work has been influential in the social sciences as well as in pragmatics.

See also: adjacency pair, discourse analysis, turn

## **The Cooperative Principle**

Grice's Cooperative Principle (often abbreviated to CP), is the claim that in conversation participants try to make their contributions suitable to the shared purpose of the 'talk exchange' that they are engaged in: that is, they cooperate with each other in the strong sense that they have a shared goal beyond understanding and being understood.

The Cooperative Principle plays a key role in Grice's theory of conversation, underwriting both the conversational maxims and the derivation of implicatures. On Grice's conception, the conversational maxims are principles that it is reasonable or rational to comply with in the pursuit of cooperation in

communication. In other words, in Grice's theory, it is because a participant in a talk exchange aims to be cooperative that she should not say things that are false, give too little or too much information and so on. Thus the CP leads to the maxims.

The Cooperative Principle also allows hearers to derive implicatures (and thus allows speakers to implicate). The idea is that a hearer, confronted with a real or merely apparent violation of a maxim will (unless there is good reason to think otherwise) assume that the speaker intended to be cooperative. Thus the hearer is justified in assuming (provisionally) that the overall contribution made by the speaker does not violate whatever maxim seems to have been violated at the level of what is said, and the usual way to maintain this assumption is to infer an implicature.

The Cooperative Principle has been heavily criticized, particularly by Asa Kasher and by Sperber and Wilson. The argument is that (rational) coordination rather than cooperation is what is necessary for communication. To communicate, a certain amount of adjustment to the preferences and abilities of the interlocutor is necessary. This can be called coordination. Coordination does not require cooperation in the full-blown sense of the CP: an utterance need not serve any goal beyond the speaker's desire to communicate; and no shared or mutual goal is necessary. The speaker wants to be understood and tailors her utterance accordingly, and the hearer wants to understand – but these are distinct goals. There is no need for a further mutual aim of the type seen in Grice's analogies, such as baking a cake or mending a car.

See also: conversational maxims

## Co-text

The text before and after the passage that is being studied; textual context or linguistic context as opposed to non-linguistic context. Also written 'cotext'.

In interpreting part of a text it is essential to be aware of the co-text, just as it is essential to be aware of the broader context in which the text was produced. Although co-text is strictly speaking one aspect of context as a whole, theorists sometimes speak of co-text and context as though they were in opposition. In that case, 'context' is restricted to the non-linguistic.

This term is mostly used in studies of written texts, but it can also be applied to spoken or signed communication, given that it simply means the words and sentences surrounding the part in question.

See also: context

## Declaration

A type of speech act in Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts. Declarations, also called declarative acts, bring about immediate changes in how things are. For example, if the head of state of a country declares war, the country is then at war. Other examples include the foreman of a jury pronouncing the defendant guilty, a captain declaring in cricket and a boss firing an employee. Declarations are the paradigm examples of Austin's original concept of performative. Arguably, these speech acts fall naturally into two groups: those that officially rule that something is the case (e.g. finding someone guilty), and those that simply make something the case (e.g. firing someone, declaring war).

See also: commissive act, directive act, expressive act, representative act

## Definite description

Definite descriptions (at least in English) are phrases formed with the definite article and a nominal restriction, for example *the green book*, *the books*, *the book you had with you yesterday*, *the books on the table*; or with a possessive plus a nominal restriction: for example *Bill's mother*, *my book*, *his English books*. This is a syntactic definition. The correct semantic characterization of definite descriptions is controversial.

Bertrand Russell proposed the following theory of the meaning of singular definite descriptions: A sentence of the form 'The F is G' means *There is at least one F and at most one F and that F is G*.

Incomplete definite descriptions are definite descriptions that do not explicitly define their referent(s) uniquely. For example, 'the cat on my desk' is a complete definite description given that there is only one cat on my desk currently. 'The door' in 'Please shut the door' is an incomplete definite description: there are many doors in the world.

See also: attributive/referential distinction

## Deixis

A technical term used in semantics and pragmatics for linguistic items that encode sensitivity to context and for uses of linguistic items that involve this kind of sensitivity. The term derives from the classical Greek word meaning to show or to point out.

Many linguistic items have deictic uses, but it is usual to distinguish a set of linguistic items which are primarily deictic from those which are not but may be used deictically. The deictic items are those elements whose linguistically encoded meaning includes a certain kind of sensitivity to context. They include pronouns like *you* and *we*, demonstratives like *this* and *that*, other indexicals, such as *here*, *there*, *now* and *then*, and terms that encode sensitivity to the social context, including second person singular pronouns in many European languages, such as French *tu* and *vous*. Inflectional morphology (endings on verbs, markers of grammatical agreement and so on) often encodes context-sensitivity. Examples include tense morphology, inflection for grammatical person, and inflection for respect-level, social distance and other social factors (as in Japanese, Korean and Austronesian languages).

Given that marking for tense, person and respect-level tend to be compulsory in the languages that have the relevant inflectional morphology, it is probable that most sentences in most languages are deictic, even before taking into account obvious deictic words such as pronouns and demonstratives. For example, a speaker saying 'The inflation rate in the UK is 2.5%' only makes a claim relative to the time of utterance. Clearly deixis is a pervasive aspect of language.

Deixis is closely related to indexicality, the sensitivity of truth-conditions to context. ('Indexicality' is the favoured term for this general area in philosophy, while the term 'deixis' is mostly preferred in linguistics.) However, on the usual understanding of the terms, deixis is a broader category than indexicality because indexicals are defined as terms that make the truth-conditions of an utterance context-sensitive. Deixis includes this and all other kinds of context-sensitivity, not all of which affects truth-conditions. For example, social deictic terms are not truth-conditional: 'Tu es intelligent' (in French) will not be false just because 'vous' was the socially appropriate pronoun. (See below for discussion of this point.)

Many items that are not primarily deictic also have deictic uses, including those that seem primarily descriptive rather than referential. For example, referential uses of definite descriptions such as 'The man who just came in' are deictic, picking out a referent from the context. Also, all incomplete definite descriptions (e.g. 'The door') pick up some of their meaning from context. There are more doors than one in the world, and even in most rooms, so the addressee will have to decide which one is meant on hearing 'Shut the door.'



Recent developments in lexical pragmatics suggest that the meanings of many expressions are modulated in use, so all words, or at least all content words (i.e., perhaps excluding some purely grammatical words) may be somewhat deictic in a weak sense. For example, on almost every occasion when a quantifier phrase is used, a domain of quantification must be inferred, as in the following utterance:

Everyone had a good time. (*i.e. everyone at the party*)

It is a matter of debate which examples of sensitivity are due to linguistically encoded properties of words, and which are due to 'free' (i.e. purely pragmatic) enrichment. It might be that quantifiers are linguistically deictic items, requiring contextual completion, or that they (and most other items) are in a sense 'deictic in use' for purely pragmatic reasons.

Items that are clearly deictic also have non-deictic uses. Most deictic items may be used anaphorically and many deictic terms also have uses that are neither deictic nor anaphoric. When a term is used anaphorically it does not function deictically, but picks up a referent from another linguistic item in the sentence, or in the wider discourse. Here are some examples of anaphoric uses of deictic terms (underlined):

Have you read 'Studies in the Way of Words'? That is a good book.  
Are we there yet?

On a deictic reading an utterance of 'Are we there yet?' would be paradoxical: it could be glossed as 'Are we (now) at a certain place away from where we are now?' Only a pedant would claim (falsely) that we will never be there, because wherever we are at any time is *here*, not there. In fact, in the example, 'there' is used anaphorically to pick out a location that was previously mentioned as (or understood to be) the destination.

Here are some examples of deictic terms used non-deictically and non-anaphorically:

On our holiday we just potted around, going here and there, doing this and that. (Non-deictive and non-anaphoric.)

You can't always get what you want. (Non-deictic and non-anaphoric on the normal reading, that one cannot always get what one wants.)

Several kinds of deixis can be distinguished on the basis of which features of context are encoded, including person deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, discourse deixis and social deixis.

It is usual to understand deixis in terms of deictic centres. The basic deictic centre is the speaker: 'here' usually picks out her location in space, 'now' her location in time, but the centre can be shifted, for example: 'Here he was, standing at the south pole. Now what?'

In *person deixis* there are at least two centres: the speaker and the addressee. Obviously 'I' (usually) picks out the former, 'you' the latter. As noted above, third person pronouns are often regarded as non-deictic expressions, because they do not relate to either centre (at least, they do not in most languages, including English). However, they are frequently used deictically. For example, A: (pointing at her husband) 'He's going to drive.' One sign of the contrast between essentially deictic 'I' and 'you' and arguably non-deictic 'he'/'she' is that it is much harder to use 'I' and 'you' anaphorically.

In many languages, pronouns are also marked for number: usually singular/plural (as in English) or singular/dual/plural (as in Arabic), although more complex systems exist.

Number and person interact in interesting ways. One example is the first person plural ('we'/'us'), which usually picks up from context a set containing the speaker and sometimes but not always containing the hearer too. Some languages mark this inclusive-we/exclusive-we distinction linguistically, either on the verb, or with different forms of the pronoun. For example in Taiwanese, 'góan' means *we-excluding-you* and 'lán' means *we-including-you*.

*Spatial deixis* (also known as space or place deixis) is encoded by adverbs ('here', 'there') demonstratives and demonstrative phrases (e.g. 'this', 'that', 'this dog', 'that cat'), certain adjectives (e.g. 'local', 'nearby'), particles ('away', 'hither') and verbs (e.g. 'come', 'go'), as well as phrases such as 'on the right of', 'in front of'.

Different languages encode different distinctions in spatial deixis. The English demonstratives and locatives form a two-term system, with one or two centres: 'here', 'this', 'this X' are said to be proximal (at or near to the speaker), while 'there', 'that', 'that X' are said to be distal (i.e. further away from the speaker-centre), but can be addressee-proximal (i.e. near the second centre).

Other languages have systems with three terms or even more, as there used to be in English (and still is in Scots): *yonder* contrasting with *here*

and *there*. Languages with a three-way distinction are often categorized as encoding either proximal/medial/distal (e.g. Classical Arabic) or speaker-proximal/addressee-proximal/distal (e.g. Japanese), although the distinction is not always clear.

Phrases such as 'to the right of' are deictic, since what is considered the right side is relative to someone: often the speaker, but sometimes the addressee (e.g. 'When you get to the traffic lights, you'll see a shop on the right') and sometimes a third party ('Sam entered the room. The falcon was on a table just to the right of a bottle of whisky.') Many languages allow a choice between such relative directions and absolute ones (e.g. 'to the north'), but some languages only have the absolute type of direction, for example, some Australian languages.

Famously, 'in front of' and 'behind' have two readings in such sentences as 'The cat is behind the sofa.' This either means that the cat is on the opposite side of the sofa from the side used for sitting (the canonical front of a sofa) or that the cat is on the other side of the sofa from the speaker (or in some cases the other side of the sofa from the addressee).

*Temporal/time deixis*: As mentioned above, tense morphology is deictic, with the primary centre of deixis at the speaker's time. If a speaker says 'It's raining,' for example, the hearer may usually take it that she meant 'It is raining *now*.' The relationship between the time referred to and the grammatical tense is complex, and is further complicated by grammatical aspect (e.g. perfective, continuous).

Other devices for marking reference time are commonly used. As with reference to space, some are absolute (e.g. 'in 1999') and some are relative ('now', 'then', 'last year', 'this morning', 'tonight', '. . . ago'). The relative terms usually express time relative to the speaker, but can be shifted to be relative to another point of view, as they often are in telling stories in the third person: 'The year 2021. Rick opens the window. It is raining. It rained yesterday. In fact, it has been raining for the last decade.'

In languages such as the Chinese languages with no grammatical tense markings these other devices (together with some aspect marking) suffice for communicating reference time. In much the same way, speakers of the Germanic languages, including English, manage to talk about future time without a (grammatical) future tense (although with the aid of modals such as 'shall', 'will').

*Discourse deixis*: Also known as text or textual deixis. In speech it is common to refer to parts of what has been said and what is to come. The terms used are adapted from temporal deixis ('the next chapter', 'my last

argument', 'your previous point', 'in the coming pages'), naturally enough, since speech takes time, and spatial deixis ('this story', 'that point'), where distal terms may be used for something said by another (e.g. 'I don't agree with that suggestion'), or for the speaker's own ideas and utterances seen from a different perspective (e.g. 'In the last chapter I have given some considerations against indexicalism. That argument seems to me to be convincing, but I set it aside here.') Note that the distinction between discourse deixis and discourse anaphora is hard to make in many cases.

*Social deixis*: Deictic terms which are context-sensitive in a different way from indexicals include socially deictic terms. Their use in an inappropriate context might be awkward or rude, but it does not make the utterance false. For example, we can take the French *vous* and *tu* to be socially deictic terms.

Vous êtes en retard.

Tu es en retard.

You are late.

It is not felicitous to use 'tu' unless the social relationship between the hearer and the speaker is informal to a certain degree, or the speaker is socially superior and can 'talk down' to the hearer. (The exact sociolinguistic details are complex.) In more formal situations, 'vous' is more socially acceptable. So we can say that the linguistic meanings of 'tu' and 'vous' encode a kind of context-sensitivity to social relations. But the social relation involved does not affect the truth-conditions of the utterance: choosing the wrong pronoun does not make the sentence false, but inappropriate.

As noted above, some languages (including East Asian and Austronesian languages) encode social context-sensitivity in more complex and pervasive ways. Japanese is a particularly comprehensive case. Verbs are obligatorily inflected for one of three levels of formality. In some cases there is socially deictic alternation of verb stems as well, somewhat like the distinction between 'leave' and 'depart' in English. With Japanese verbs for giving, receiving and requesting there are several forms, choice of which is sensitive to the relative social status of speaker and addressee. In addition, many nouns are conventionally prefaced by an honorific particle, including the usual words for such common items as tea, money and hot bath. Leaving out the particle sounds rough or informal. Finally, there is also a large selection of first and second person pronouns which differ in formality and 'closeness'.

See also: demonstrative, indexicality, reference assignment

## Demonstrative

A group of indexical words or phrases that are used to refer, including *this*, *that*, *these* and *those* (in English). These words are used to make demonstrative phrases, for example: *this pen*, *that car*, *these keys*, *those penguins*. Demonstratives are often accompanied by a gesture that demonstrates the object referred to, for example pointing or gazing at the object, hence, originally, the name ‘demonstrative’ for these words.

As with other indexicals, the referent of a demonstrative must be worked out to know what proposition the speaker is expressing. The particular demonstrative used restricts the search for referents, in subtle ways. If there is one book on a table the speaker may refer to it with ‘this book’ or ‘that book’, but if it is the nearer of two, then ‘this book’ is preferred, except if both books are nearer the hearer, when again ‘that book’ is acceptable.

In English and other languages the demonstratives encode a two-way proximal/distal distinction, but other languages have a three-way or four-way distinction. For example in Japanese: ‘kono’ (speaker-proximal: *this*)/‘sono’ (addressee-proximal: *that, by you*)/‘ano’ (speaker-and-addressee-distal: *that, away from both of us*).

In addition to their use for space deixis, demonstratives are frequently used for discourse deixis, as in: “I glad you told me that” and “This is what I’ll be talking about today.”

See also: deixis, indexicality

## de re/de dicto distinction

Some linguistic expressions, including propositional attitude verbs such as ‘think’ and ‘hope’, modals such as ‘It is possible that’, and temporal expressions such as ‘yesterday’ create what are called opaque contexts. It is within these contexts that the *de re/de dicto* distinction arises. For example, the following sentence has two interpretations:

Willard thinks that someone is following him.

The first interpretation can be glossed as: *Willard thinks that someone or other is following him*, that is what he thinks is just that he is being followed by a person or persons. This is the *de dicto* reading.

The second interpretation can be glossed as: There is someone of whom Willard thinks that that person is following him. This is the *de re* reading.

The distinction here between *de re* and *de dicto* readings arises because of the embedding under the verb 'think'.

*De re*, but not *de dicto* readings keep the same truth value when two expressions that co-refer are substituted. For example, the *de re* reading of 'Willard thinks that Prince Philip is following him', is equivalent to 'Willard thinks that the Duke of Edinburgh is following him', since Prince Philip and the Duke of Edinburgh are the same individual, but the *de dicto* readings are not equivalent, since Willard may not know that they are the same person.

## Descriptive use

In relevance theory, descriptive use is contrasted with interpretive use. In descriptive use, an utterance is intended to be relevant as a representation of a state of affairs, while in interpretive use, the utterance is intended to be relevant as a representation of some other representation, such as another utterance or a thought.

Consider the following dialogue. B's utterance might be a tacitly interpretive report of what the prime minister said, or, more likely, it might be intended as a description of what B can see. In the latter case it is an example of descriptive use.

A (standing at a bus stop): What did the prime minister say on the TV?

B: Look! The bus is coming.

Everyday assertions, guesses, suggestions and so on are examples of descriptive use, since in these cases the speaker is putting forward a proposition as a true (or possibly true) description of the way things are.

According to relevance theory, all utterances are interpretive in a sense, since every utterance is used to resemble (to some degree) a thought held by the speaker. The term 'descriptive' is reserved, though, for utterances that are not interpretive in a second-order way: that is, utterances which resemble thoughts of the speaker which are not themselves interpretations of other thoughts or utterances.

See also: interpretive use

## de se

A term for a certain type of reading of a sentence that may have more than one interpretation. For example, the sentence 'John thinks that he should go on a diet' may have two interpretations on both of which 'he' refers to John. The everyday interpretation is the *de se* case. John notices he has been putting on weight and decides that dieting is called for. The other interpretation is for a case where, for example, John sees an overweight man on some video footage, and thinks that that man should diet, unaware that the man in question is John himself. In the first case, but not the second one, the reference made to John with the word 'he' is *de se*.

The term *de se*, Latin for 'of oneself', was introduced by the philosopher David Lewis.

## Dictiveness-formality distinction

The distinction between what is said (by a speaker) and conventional meaning. Grice treated these as logically independent categories: so the logical possibilities are: +Dictive, +Formal; –Dictive, –Formal; +Dictive, –Formal; and –Formal, +Dictive.

Dictive and formal meaning coincide in cases where what the speaker asserts is just what the sentence she uttered means. Use of a gesture or sound with no conventional meaning might convey an implicature, but no formal or dictive content. Any words that give rise to conventional implicatures (e.g. 'but') do so formally, but not dictively (the dictive content of 'but' is the same as that of 'and'). The last possibility is perhaps the most interesting. Grice suggested that when a speaker meant by 'He is an evangelist' something like 'He is a sanctimonious, hypocritical, racist, reactionary, money-grubber,' this would be dictive meaning (part of what is said) that is not formal.

See also: timeless meaning, what is said

## Direction of fit

A concept that is used in speech-act theory and philosophy of language to describe the difference between different types of speech act. For example, assertions describe the world. This is called a word-to-world direction of fit, because the meaning expressed by the words used should match the way

that the world is. In contrast, orders and requests are aimed at getting the hearer to adopt a course of action that will make the world a certain way. Here the direction of fit is world-to-word: the world should be changed to fit what has been said.

The term 'direction of fit' used in this sense comes from John Searle, inspired by an idea in the work of Elizabeth Anscombe, although the phrase 'direction of fit' comes from J. L. Austin, who used it in a different way.

See also: speech acts

## Directive act

A type of illocutionary act. Directive acts are speech acts that are aimed at getting the hearer to follow a certain course of action: giving an order, making a request, giving advice, and asking a question (on the assumption that a question is an attempt to get the hearer to produce an answer).

Directives are one of the types of illocutionary acts in both Searle's and Bach and Harnish's different taxonomies of speech acts. Directives have world-to-word direction of fit: the speaker is trying to get the hearer to make the world correspond in some way to what she says.

See also: constative, acknowledgement

## Direct speech

When a speaker reports what another speaker says in a way that presents it as a word-for-word reproduction, that is direct speech. Direct speech is also known by its Latin name, *oratio recta*. In written English (and many other languages) direct speech is normally marked by quotation marks:

Mary said, 'Pragmatics is fascinating.'

See also: indirect speech

## Direct speech act

In some speech acts, the relation between the illocutionary force and the words uttered is straightforward. For example, it is possible to promise by saying 'I promise that/to . . .'. Speech acts of this sort are called direct speech



acts. In contrast, speech acts where the link between the force and the form of the sentence uttered is less direct are called indirect speech acts.

It is not always pre-theoretically clear what is a direct, and what is an indirect, speech act. Is an assertive utterance of an ordinary declarative sentence such as 'Oslo is the capital of Norway' a direct or indirect speech act of assertion? The answer depends on whether there is a rule or convention, as some theorists think, that the default use of declaratives is assertive. There is an explicit performative 'assert', so one could say 'I assert that Oslo is the capital of Norway.' Is this a more direct speech act?

If it is accepted that all utterances have some illocutionary force, then indirect speech acts seem more common than direct speech acts. There are many ways of making a request, for example, most of which do not involve uttering the word 'request'.

See also: illocutionary force, indirect speech act

## Disambiguation

The process of selecting the intended sense of an ambiguous word, phrase or sentence from among the senses allowed by the grammar.

Disambiguation is largely unconscious and automatic, and most ambiguity therefore goes unnoticed by speaker or hearer. For example, if a speaker utters 'I've got to go to the bank before we go shopping', it is unlikely that either hearer or speaker will become consciously aware that 'bank' might refer to a geographical feature by a river rather than a branch of a financial institution.

If the context does not provide clear enough clues to the speaker's intended meaning then the ambiguity may not be resolvable in the ordinary way. In such cases the ambiguity may come to conscious attention.

Grice's Cooperative Principle and maxims could be used to account for disambiguation. However Grice seems to have seen disambiguation along with reference assignment as pre-pragmatic processes, since they are prerequisites for determination of what is said – which he took as the starting point for inference in communication.

While pragmatic accounts of disambiguation mostly focus on acceptability, a great deal of work has also been done in psycholinguistics, largely focusing on accessibility of candidate interpretations.

See also: accessibility, ambiguity, lexical ambiguity, proposition expressed, reference assignment, structural ambiguity, what is said

## Discourse

A more general and more technical term than 'conversation', 'discourse' can be defined as a series of connected utterances, although on some conceptions it is more global, and also includes other texts in the same genre as the one being studied, previous conversations etc.

Since utterances (in the technical sense used in pragmatics) may be written or spoken, a discourse can be a written text or a spoken exchange. The utterances in a discourse may overlap, particularly in spoken discourse: speakers interrupt and speak over each other.

The discourse is a basic unit in the very different fields of discourse representation theory and discourse analysis, and there has been considerable research on discourse structure. It is controversial whether this structure is due to discourse-level principles or whether it arises from general principles governing communication such as Gricean maxims or the presumption of relevance.

See also: discourse analysis, discourse representation theory, utterance

## Discourse analysis

An approach in which data from talk exchanges and written texts are collected and closely analysed, with the aim of shedding light on the ways people do things with words. Discourse analysis studies the use of language as a social practice or a set of social practices. Practitioners of discourse analysis see participants in discourse as constructing it through their speech acts, and they also see talk as a way (or perhaps, the way) that social arrangements are constructed.

The theoretical basis of discourse analysis comes from social sciences and philosophy – particularly the work of Wittgenstein and Austin in the 1940s and 1950s. Discourse analysis shares with pragmatics an interest in language use, but as the name of the field suggests, it focuses on the structure of discourse, particularly naturally occurring texts and talk, rather than isolated or idealized utterances.

There are different tendencies within discourse analysis. For example, Critical Discourse Analysis focuses on ways in which social and political power relationships are manifested in language use, whereas Conversation Analysis (sometimes seen as an alternative to Discourse Analysis, sometimes as

a sub-type) looks at the nitty-gritty of conversation: how speakers take turns, change topic and so on.

See also: Conversation Analysis

## Discourse representation theory

This theory, whose name is usually abbreviated to DRT, attempts to formalize quantifier binding, anaphoric use of pronouns and related issues, including cases where the anaphoric dependency or binding reaches across sentence boundaries.

Hans Kamp's DRT and Irene Heim's formally similar File-Change Semantics both postulate that a discourse level of representation is necessary to understand these questions. It is suggested that this level of representation is a mental model of a discourse, constructed by the hearer/reader and suitably modified by each new sentence. Thus in this model, the meaning of a sentence can be seen as dynamic: its potential to change the existing model, that is, its *Context Change Potential*.

DRT is intended as a contribution to semantics rather than pragmatics. It does not attempt to capture the inference involved in (e.g.) selecting a referent for a pronoun, but to place semantic constraints on possible selections. Nonetheless, in seeking to apply a formal model to discourse-level relations, this approach and its descendant, Groenendijk and Stokhof's dynamic semantics, have been influential in formal pragmatics.

Asher and Lascarides's SDRT is an attempt to extend the dynamic semantic approach further into the area of pragmatics by inclusion of coherence-relations between sentences in discourse such as Elaboration, Narration and Explanation.

## The division of pragmatic labour

The claim that an utterance containing marked words will have a marked meaning, where *marked* means out-of-the-ordinary, and conversely, that an utterance that is linguistically unmarked will have an unmarked meaning. This claim is also sometimes known as Horn's principle, after Larry Horn.

A marked linguistic item is one that is unusual, and not part of the basic vocabulary. A marked meaning might be one that is far from stereotypes and common ideas.

Uttering the second of the following two sentences (James McCawley's examples) suggests that the speaker did not directly kill the sheriff, but that some less obvious scenario occurred, for example she took the bullets out of his gun so that he was unable to defend himself.

I killed the sheriff.

I caused the sheriff to die.

A Gricean explanation is often given for such examples. In using a marked item the speaker will often violate maxims of manner (brevity or clarity) and will thus convey a related implicature.

Horn introduced the term 'division of pragmatic labour' because in his theory two principles are at work, each accounting for some of the cases. Normally (in unmarked cases) Horn's R-principle dominates, while in marked cases the Q-principle comes into play and marked meanings are derived as Q-implicatures.

In relevance theory the claim is that when a speaker puts a hearer to greater effort the hearer is entitled to greater cognitive effects, so, for example, in contexts where 'cause to die' is harder to process it should convey some additional nuance beyond 'kill'.

See also: markedness, Q-principle, R-principle

## Echoic use

In relevance theory, echoic use is the use of a representation to attribute a thought or utterance (i.e. a representation) to someone else, and to express an attitude towards that thought or utterance. Echoic use is therefore a variety of interpretive use and of attributive use, so the relation between the representation used and the one attributed is a relation of resemblance. There are many attitudes that may be expressed to the interpreted representation. They can be broadly categorized as positive ('associative') or negative ('dissociative').

Verbal irony is analysed in relevance theory as a variety of echoic use: specifically, echoic use with an implicitly dissociative attitude, where the interpretive use itself is also implicit.

See also: interpretive use, irony

## Effectives

A type of speech act in Bach and Harnish's taxonomy of illocutionary acts. Effectives include such speech acts as nominating, declaring war and abdicating. Effectives, like verdictives, change the facts, rather than communicating a description or an attitude, and they rely on social conventions. Unlike verdictives, which make judgements official, the role of effectives is just to establish a state of affairs. Effectives can be thought of as pure performatives.

In Searle's well-known taxonomy of speech acts the category of declarations covers both effectives and verdictives.

See also: verdictives

## Ellipsis

When linguistic material is missing from the pronounced form of a phrase or sentence, that phrase/sentence is said to be (syntactically) elliptical. For example:

Mary kicked John, and Jane, Bill.

Here the verb 'kicked' has been elided. In the next two examples the elided material is in brackets:

Jane fought because Mary did (fight).  
She has stopped now but I don't know why (she stopped).

Recovery of elided elements is necessary to work out what proposition is being expressed by an utterance of a sentence. The missing material is recovered from the linguistic antecedent. This is usually regarded as a task for parsing and thus in a sense pre-pragmatic. There may be more than one possible reconstruction, as in the following example:

John noticed that Mary left and Jane did too.

Selection of the speaker's intended sense in such examples is a pragmatic task: a form of disambiguation.

In syntactic ellipsis, the full sentence is (in some sense) present although partly unpronounced. Utterances such as the following examples in which the speaker does not make explicit some material that she can trust the hearer to recover for himself are often loosely described as elliptical (this might be 'semantic' or 'pragmatic' ellipsis). The questions in brackets illustrate in what way the meaning seems unspecific:

Marvellous! (*what is marvellous?*)  
The door is open. (*which door?*)  
He finished his book. (*finished doing what with it?*)  
On the top shelf. (*what is on the top shelf?*)

It is sometimes argued that all utterances that are elliptical in this loose sense are in fact syntactically elliptical.

See also: fragment

## Entailment

The central concept in logic and also crucial to semantics and pragmatics. Entailment is a relation between items that are truth-bearers (things that can be true or false): logical formulae, propositions, statements, perhaps sentences. One item entails another if and only if the truth of the first item is sufficient for the truth of the second item: that is, if it is the case that if the first item is true the second one must be true.

The first item in each of the following pairs entails the second. In the last two examples they entail each other (i.e. are equivalent):

Chomsky is American and Descartes was French.

Chomsky is American.

There is a dog in that basket.

There is an animal in that basket.

John is a bachelor.

John is an unmarried, male, adult human.

All cats purr.

It is not the case that some cats don't purr.

As the examples show, entailments can depend on logical vocabulary such as 'and', 'every', 'some' and 'not' or on non-logical vocabulary like 'dog', 'animal', 'bachelor'.

## Essential condition

In Searle's work on speech acts, the essential condition on a speech act is a felicity condition with a special status: unlike the other felicity conditions it constitutes the type of speech act. For example, the essential condition of the speech act of promising is that the hearer intends that in making the utterance she is putting herself under an obligation to carry out the action mentioned. The essential condition for giving an order is that the speaker intends her utterance as an attempt to get the hearer to carry out the action mentioned. The essential condition of a greeting is that the speaker intends the utterance to be counted as a 'courteous indication of recognition' of the hearer.

See also: felicity conditions, preparatory conditions, sincerity condition

## Etiolation of language

The phrase 'etiolations of language' was used by Austin to describe the way that performatives uttered on stage, in poetry or in similar circumstances are, in a certain way, 'hollow or void'. Actors often utter lines that resemble

promises, bets, marriage vows, questions, and any number of other speech acts, but are any of these speech acts really taking place? An onstage promise or marriage vow obviously does not bind the actors, although it may bind the characters.

One approach to the question (also suggested by Austin) is to treat etiolated speech as parasitic on normal use of language. Beyond acting, there might be other forms of parasitism or etiolation. For example, in fiction and in talking to oneself, different assumptions about ordinary language usage are dropped. Both might be analysed as working through resemblance to more typical language use.

Etiolation is sometimes seen as equivalent to non-serious or 'playful' use of language. The technical term etiolation usefully sidesteps the question whether fiction, plays, poetry and so on are necessarily non-serious.

See also: speech acts

## **Exercitive**

In Austin's classification of speech acts, exercitives are the class of speech acts concerned with giving a decision in favour of or against a particular course of action, or with advocating a course of action.

Examples include making the decision to go to war (e.g. 'We ride to Gondor!') and issuing a formal recommendation (e.g. 'This committee recommends that  $\pi$  be defined as equal to 3.')

See also: behabitive, commissive, expositive, verdictive, speech acts

## **Exhibitive utterance**

In Grice's work, a purely exhibitive utterance is one that is aimed at showing the hearer that the speaker has a certain belief. For example, a speaker says 'Clara is on the mat,' aiming the hearer to take the utterance as evidence that she (the speaker) believes that Clara is on the mat. The hearer may (or may not) then draw his own conclusions about whether the speaker is right to believe that Clara is on the mat.

In contrast, a protreptic utterance is one where the main aim is to get the hearer to share the speaker's belief, via showing it to him. The intention



behind a protreptic utterance is that the hearer goes a step further in the inferences he draws from the utterance.

The exhibitive/protreptic distinction can be generalized to imperatives and questions. A purely exhibitive imperative is one where the aim is for the hearer to realize that the speaker wants a certain action carried out. A purely exhibitive question is one where the aim is to get the hearer to realize that the speaker would like the question answered.

See also: protreptic utterances

## Experimental pragmatics

The application of experimental techniques, largely from psycholinguistics, to areas of interest in pragmatics. Techniques used include on-line measures such as eye-tracking and timed responses to stimuli, as well as off-line measures such as the choice from a set of candidates of the best sentence to describe a scene. Experimental pragmatics as such is a very recent development, although existing psycholinguistic work on disambiguation, semantic illusions and other aspects of interpretation is relevant.

Typical experimental work has investigated the timing and order of events in interpretation: are there default implicatures, generated in every context; does metaphor interpretation involve construction and rejection of the literal meaning of the sentence? To some extent, experimental pragmatics raises questions not answered by most existing pragmatic theories, which do not make strong predictions about processing.

Some experiments have concerned the development of pragmatic ability. For example, it has been found that children are systematically less likely than adults to understand utterances of a sentence of the form 'Some Xs are Ys' as communicating that not all Xs are Ys. Their interpretation is the one given by the sentence semantics alone: some (and possibly all) Xs are Ys.

## Explicature

In relevance theory, an explicature is a proposition that is part of what is explicitly communicated by an utterance. That is, it is something that (1) the speaker intended to communicate and (2) is not implicated.

Explicatures are distinguished from implicatures by the criterion that an explicature must be a development of the linguistically encoded logical form of the sentence or phrase uttered. For example, an explicature of an utterance

of 'On the middle shelf', might be: *The strawberry jam is on the middle shelf.*

According to relevance theory, an utterance may have both a basic-level explicature and higher-level explicatures. An utterance of 'I will give up' might convey the basic-level explicature that John (the speaker) will give up smoking. If uttered as a promise it would also have a higher-level explicature: *John is promising that he (John) will give up smoking.*

Both basic-level and higher-level explicatures may be communicated strongly or weakly.

See also: higher-level explicature, weak communication

## Explicit performative

In J. L. Austin's work on speech acts, an explicit performative is a performative utterance that uses a verb that names the act that is being performed by the utterance. 'I promise to be there,' is an explicit performative, while 'I'll certainly be there,' used to make a promise, is performative, but not explicitly so. Performatives that are not explicit are called *primary* (or sometimes *implicit*) performatives.

Some other verbs and verb phrases that give rise to explicit performatives are 'promise', 'bet', 'predict', 'name', 'pronounce . . . man and wife', and 'adjourn'.

Not all performatives can be expressed as explicit performatives. For example, insulting is a speech act, but one cannot insult someone by saying 'I hereby insult you.'

One reason for the general abandonment of the performative/constative distinction is that verbs like 'assert' and 'state' also name the acts that they can be used to perform. In uttering 'I hereby assert that . . . ' a speaker can perform the act of making an assertion. But assertion is surely a constative, not a performative, if the distinction can be made at all. So the distinction seems unsafe.

See also: constative, performative, primary performative, speech act

## Exploitation

If there is a standard way of behaving in a certain situation then by behaving differently it is possible to convey something, rather than have one's behaviour simply be seen as inappropriate. This is exploitation. In Grice's theory of

conversation speakers can violate maxims of conversation in order to convey implicatures. The key to this is that the hearer must consider the possibility that the speaker's violation is a calculated exploitation rather than a mistake or a straightforward abuse of the rules.

Not all maxim violations are examples of exploitation in this sense, of course. Lying involves breaking a maxim of truthfulness, but covertly. Some more overt violations are also not exploitation: a speaker may signal that she is about to speak inappropriately and therefore no implicature should be derived. Someone might say: 'I know that you find my stories boring, but I'm going to tell you this one anyway.' If her subsequent speech turns out to be irrelevant, long-winded or underinformative, no implicature need result.

See also: implicature, conversational maxims, politeness

## Expositive

In Austin's classification of speech acts, expositive acts are speech acts that give information, such as stating, asserting, defining, reminding and guessing. If utterances were classified into constatives and performatives, then these speech acts would be constatives.

Most or all of these speech acts would be classified as 'representative' acts in Searle's taxonomy of speech acts.

See also: behabitive, commissive, exercitive, verdictive, speech acts

## Expressive act

A type of speech act in Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts. Expressives are speech acts in which the speaker expresses a certain type of attitude, such as pleasure, displeasure, liking or disliking. They include thanking, praising, blaming and speech acts which express emotions. For example:

Well done!

I know we would all like to thank the chairman for his dedication and diligence.

See also: commissive act, declaration, directive act, representative act

## Expressive content

Some utterances apparently do not express a proposition: for example 'Wow!', 'Ouch!', 'Hello' and 'Goodbye'. Such utterances express rather than describing, and in philosophy of language they are often said to have expressive (rather than descriptive) content.

According to this perspective, an utterance of 'Wow!' expresses the speaker's amazement, and 'Ouch!' expresses mild pain. It is harder to paraphrase what 'Hello' and 'Goodbye' express.

Some expressions of this type, including *wow* and *ouch*, can be used ironically. In such cases the speaker does not intend to endorse the standard expressive content of the utterance.

See also: proposition expressed

## Face

In politeness theory, the image that a person has as a member of society is called 'face', a concept borrowed from the sociologist Erving Goffman. 'Face' in this technical sense is the fundamental notion in Brown and Levinson's work on politeness. They divide face into negative and positive aspects, related respectively to the desire to be free to pursue one's goals, and the desire to be liked. The claim is that attempts at politeness can be understood as attempts to avoid damaging another's 'negative face' or 'positive face' or both.

See also: politeness

## Felicity conditions

In speech-act theory, felicity conditions are the conditions that must be satisfied for a speech act to come off successfully. If they are not satisfied then the act is either a misfire (i.e. the action is not really accomplished) or an abuse (the action is accomplished, but insincerely). For example, if the person at a wedding ceremony who says 'I now pronounce you man and wife' is not qualified to officiate, then no marriage has taken place: a misfire. But if the bride and groom only got married to meet the terms of a will and have no intention to live together as a married couple, then the marriage does come into existence but is an abuse.

In Austin's work, the general form of felicity conditions is: (1) There is a conventional procedure with a conventional effect, and the situation and participants involved are suitable according to the procedure. (2) The procedure is carried out correctly and completely by all the participants. (3) If the procedure specifies attitudes for the participants, they have those attitudes, and if the procedure specifies actions to be subsequently carried out by the participants, those actions are carried out.

See also: abuse, misfire, speech acts

## Figurative speech

The use of language non-literally. Metaphor, irony and hyperbole are all types of figurative speech, where the speaker does not mean by her utterance what the words used normally mean.

Several types of figurative speech including irony, metaphor, hyperbole and understatement are often analysed in Gricean terms as blatant violations of the first maxim of quality: Do not say what you believe to be false. On the assumption that the speaker is nonetheless being cooperative, she is taken to implicate a figurative meaning. This account does not explain how the hearer infers that the implicated meaning is the opposite of what is said (irony) or a related but weaker meaning (hyperbole) etc.

In some recent theories, metaphor and hyperbole are analysed in terms of lexical modulation. Consequently, according to these accounts metaphorical and hyperbolic utterances express true propositions.

See also: literal speech, conversational maxims

## Filter

In work on presuppositions, filters are linguistic items or constructions that block some but not all presuppositions. For example, utterances of the sentence 'John regrets eating all the cake' are said to presuppose that John ate all the cake (or at least that he believes that he did). If this sentence is joined with another by a logical connective such as 'if', 'and', 'or', utterances of the resulting sentence may have the same presuppositions, but need not. For example:

Either John has no conscience, or he regrets eating all the cake.

Either John is completely innocent, or he regrets eating all the cake.

Utterances of the first sentence are said to presuppose that John ate all the cake, but utterances of the second do not presuppose this. The explanation is that in this context, 'John is completely innocent' communicates that John did not eat the cake, and this is enough to stop the presupposition that he did eat all the cake from arising.

See also: hole, plug

## Focus

The focus of a sentence is a part of that sentence that is prosodically marked (i.e. with prominent stress and/or intonation) and has a special status in the information structure of the sentence and the dialogue. A rule of thumb is that if a

sentence is uttered as an answer to a question then the part of the sentence in focus is the answer to the question, as the following examples demonstrate:

What did Mary do?

Mary kicked JOHN.

?? MARY kicked John.

What did Mary do to John?

She KICKED him.

?? SHE kicked him.

?? She kicked HIM.

Focus is a complex notion. Theorists often distinguish between information focus (as described above) and contrastive focus, as seen in the following example:

A: Bring all the dogs, including Teddy.

B: Teddy's a CAT.

See also: information structure, intonation

## Folk pragmatics

Pre-theoretical knowledge, beliefs and expectations about communication and use of language. The term 'folk pragmatics' is modelled on 'folk physics' (pre-theoretical expectations about heat, light, how objects move, etc.) and 'folk psychology' (pre-theoretical expectations about how behaviour relates to thoughts and aims).

One source of evidence about folk beliefs is how we talk about the domain in question. Ordinary language is rich with words for talking about communication, including: *topic, interruption, say, mean* (as in 'Did you mean that?'), *mention, quote, discuss, argue, indicate, literal, ironic* and *sarcastic*. The vocabulary available for talking about communication differs somewhat from language to language. For example, positive feedback to a conversational partner through short words or encouraging noises is important in conversation, across languages and cultures. This concept is not lexicalized in English, but is in Japanese: 'aizuchi'.

Systematic investigation sometimes begins with folk words and transforms them to technical terms. In physics this transition was underway several centuries ago (e.g. *force*, *energy*). In pragmatics, a younger science, we can see it happening in Grice's use of 'what is said' in a 'favoured sense'. It is possible that the dominant folk theory of communication is the code model. If so, Grice's work makes a considerable break from folk pragmatics.

See also: the code model, meaning, what is said

## Formal pragmatics

This is the study of pragmatic phenomena using techniques and notations from logic and mathematics. Formal pragmatics is largely an extension from formal, model-theoretic semantics into the domain of more context-sensitive elements of speaker meaning. Formal pragmatics and dynamic approaches to semantics such as Discourse Representation Theory are closely related.

To date, work in formal pragmatics has only been concerned with a subset of pragmatic topics and topics on the semantic-pragmatics interface, including definiteness and indefiniteness, presupposition, scalar implicature, conventional implicature and focus.

See also: semantic-pragmatics interface

## Fragment

Linguistic material that is less than a complete sentence. Many utterances are of fragments. For example:

Over here!

Water!

On the second shelf down, behind the jam.

Nice one!

A: How many cats do you have?

B: Five.

Fragments are generally, although not always, linguistic constituents: preposition phrases, noun phrases and so on. Uttering a non-constituent is usually strange:



- \* shelf down
- \* cats do you

Fragments can be used to express complete propositions. For example, a speaker uttering “On the top shelf” might mean: *The wine is on the top shelf*.

It is controversial whether fragments are always, sometimes or never syntactically elliptical.

See also: ellipsis

## Free enrichment

Pragmatic effects on the proposition expressed by an utterance which are not due to the filling in of slots or variables in the linguistic structure of the sentence, nor to disambiguation. For example, consider an utterance of the following sentence to a child who has fallen and cut himself:

You are not going to die.

The proposition expressed, intuitively is: *You (the child) are not going to die from that cut*. The speaker clearly would not have intended to convey that the child is not going to die full stop, i.e. is not going to die ever. So the proposition expressed contains a component (*from that cut*) that is not present in the linguistic form of the sentence uttered.

How much ‘free’ enrichment takes place in pragmatic processing is a matter of current research. Indexicalists deny that there is any free enrichment, claiming that all pragmatically inferred effects on the proposition expressed are due to saturation of overt or hidden variables or disambiguation.

The term ‘free enrichment’ is a misnomer, since enrichment is constrained by pragmatic principles: it is free only in the sense that it is not mandated by the linguistic material.

Recanati’s ‘strengthening’ and Bach’s ‘expansion’ are terms that mean approximately the same as free enrichment. Bach proposes that components of the proposition expressed due to expansion be marked with curly brackets ‘{}’. In this notation, the proposition expressed by the utterance above would be written:

You (the child) are not going to die {from that cut}.

See also: linguistic underdeterminacy thesis, saturation

## Functionalism

The claim that the forms of language are partly or wholly determined by its function, which is assumed (by functionalists about language) to be communication.

The word 'pragmatics' is sometimes used to mean the study of language from this point of view. On this conception of pragmatics, pragmatics and syntax are investigations of the same object, language, but differ in looking at it from different perspectives.

Of course, language has many uses besides communication, for example in word-games and in talking to oneself and various non-communicative but socially meaningful uses. Functionalism claims that communication, as its central use, shapes language.

## Functions of language

Characteristic uses or purposes of language. The claim that language is fitted for its main function, assumed to be communication, is called functionalism. Much work in philosophy has focused on the use of language to convey information about states of affairs. Speech-act theory draws attention to many other uses of language.

The structuralist linguist Roman Jakobson postulated that language has six functions: *referential*, *expressive*, *conative*, *phatic*, *metalingual* and *poetic*, famously saying that 'language must be investigated in all the variety of its functions.'

Jakobson's functions were developed in the context of his model of communication, a version of the code model, with sender, receiver, code, channel and message, plus context. Each function relates to one component of that model. The referential function is to convey information and relates to the context. The expressive function is to express the speaker's emotions, while the conative (or sometimes 'appellative') function is connected with the hearer of the utterance. The phatic function is to develop and maintain communication; it relates to the channel. The metalingual function is to

comment on or ask questions about the code used. Finally, the poetic function focuses on the message for its own sake, as in puns and other playful use of language.

See also: code model, illocutionary act, functionalism, metalinguistic, phatic communication, speech acts

## Game-theoretic pragmatics

Game theory is the mathematical study of decisions taken by more than one agent, where the pay-off for each agent may depend on the decisions of other agents. Each agent can be an individual person, an organization or any other entity that takes action, and pay-offs can be in money, food or any other valued commodity. Game theory abstracts away from these specifics to the structural elements of situations, which may be competitive (i.e. the agents' interests clash), cooperative (i.e. the agents' interests are aligned) or mixed situations with elements of competition and cooperation. In some circumstances, coordinated, collectively rational behaviour can arise from individual agents' selfish decisions to maximize their own advantage.

There are two types of game-theoretic account of pragmatics. One models the communicative situation faced by the speaker and hearer each time an utterance is made. The aim is to show how communication, seen as coordination on an interpretation, is achieved, where that coordination results from both parties independently seeking to maximize their return.

The second type of account involves evolutionary game theory. The aim is to model the emergence of regularities of language or conventions of language use (such as a maxim of truthfulness) in a community of interacting agents.

Game theory is also used in biology to model animal signalling systems.

## Generalized conversational implicature

One type of conversational implicature, according to Grice. All conversational implicatures are part of what is communicated, but not part of the timeless meaning of the words uttered (in contrast to what is said). In addition, *generalized* conversational implicatures (sometimes called 'GCI's) do not depend on particular features of the context, in contrast to particularized conversational implicatures. A generalized implicature of saying that *p* (where *p* is some proposition) is one that is *normally* carried by saying that *p* (i.e., in the absence of special circumstances).

For example, an utterance of 'John went into a house yesterday' would normally implicate that the house was not John's. Similarly, 'John is meeting a woman' would normally implicate that the woman he was meeting was not his wife, sister etc.

Generalized conversational implicatures can be cancelled explicitly or by special features of the context. As an example of contextual cancellation: a cave-loving government bans dwelling in houses. There are even fines for stepping into a house. A snitch says, 'John went into a house yesterday.' There is no implicature that it was not his own.

The existence and theoretical importance of generalized conversational implicatures are controversial. Since they can be contextually cancelled they are not independent of context, and many theorists see no need to treat them as a separate category from particularized implicatures. However in Levinson's neo-Gricean theory, many implicatures are treated as default inferences.

See also: implicature

## Hearer

The intended recipient of an utterance. Utterances can be written or in sign language, or can be non-linguistic gestures. Consequently the term 'hearer' is not limited to people who hear spoken sentences.

A distinction is sometimes made between hearer and addressee. In that case an *addressee* is an intended recipient of the utterance, while a hearer is any consumer of the utterance. This might include the addressee, but can also include those who overhear an utterance not intended for them.

See also: utterance

## Hearsay particle

A morphological affix which indicates that the speaker of the utterance is reporting something that she has heard from someone else. In English, a speaker can indicate that she is relying on what others have told her by use of a parenthetical such as 'apparently' or by embedding the main sentence under a subordinating phrase such as 'I hear that . . .' or 'They say that . . .'.

In a number of languages hearsay is marked morphologically (i.e. at the sub-word level). For example, Japanese has an affix *-tte* which marks reported speech.

Mary wa kashikoi-tte

Mary topic-marker *is-bright* tte.

(Someone) said Mary is bright.

Hearsay particles are thought not to contribute to truth-conditions. As a response to 'They say that she's bright,' 'That's not true' may deny that 'they' say that. In contrast, a denial of 'Mary wa kashikoi-tte' can only deny that Mary is intelligent.

Apparently, some hearsay particles may only be used to report utterances (e.g. Japanese *tte*), while others (e.g. Sissala *ré*) may also be used to mark thoughts that are attributed to others.

## Hedge

Linguistic items that indicate a weakened commitment on the part of the speaker are called hedges. There are many ways to hedge: a speaker could

hedge her commitment to the truth of a proposition  $p$ , by saying, for example:

Apparently,  $p$   
 Probably  $p$   
 To the best of my knowledge  $p$   
 $p$ , although I'm not sure about that.

It has been argued that it is possible to hedge about commitment to Grice's maxims: for example the second maxim of truthfulness: 'I don't have strong evidence for this, but . . .'; manner maxims: 'This isn't the best way of putting it, but . . .'. Such expressions are sometimes called *maxim hedges*.

### **'Hereby' test**

A test proposed and rejected by J. L. Austin for distinguishing between performative and constative utterances. Inserting the word 'hereby' into many performative utterances is felicitous, but inserting it into certain constatives produces very odd results:

I hereby pronounce you man and wife.  
 We hereby inform you that your account is closed.  
 Notice is hereby given that shoplifters will be prosecuted.  
 It is hereby resolved that the board will be dissolved.  
 ?? I hereby play the saxophone.  
 ?? We hereby go to work on the train.

This is not a reliable test, however. It produces felicitous sentences with some constatives, including ones with the supposedly central constative verbs of asserting and stating:

I hereby assert that the earth is round.  
 I hereby state that Pluto is a planet.

The failure of the hereby test to reliably mark the supposed distinction between performatives and constatives is one reason why Austin proposed instead that the distinction be dropped in favour of an account in terms of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.

See also: constative, performative, speech act

## Heuristic

In psychology and cognitive science, a heuristic is a rule of thumb, that is, a procedure for solving a problem that may arrive at the right answer but does not guarantee it.

Some heuristics are shortcuts: they reach decisions fast and use only a small amount of cognitive resources. Given that humans have limited processing resources, it makes sense for cognition to make considerable use of such ‘fast and frugal’ heuristics, where they are accurate enough and more economical than procedures that guarantee the right answer. Moreover, there are no such procedures for certain key types of problem, such as inference to the best explanation, so here it seems that heuristics must be used.

The relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure is a heuristic for one particular type of inference to the best explanation: finding the intended interpretation of an utterance. Levinson’s Q-, I- and M-principles are also spelled out as heuristics – for the speaker as well as the hearer.

See also: abductive inference, relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure

## Higher-level explicature

In relevance theory, a higher-level explicature is an assumption that is explicitly conveyed by an utterance (i.e. an explicature), but is not the basic-level explicature of the utterance.

Explicatures are defined as developments of the logical form of the phrase or sentence uttered. Higher-level explicatures are explicatures that develop on the basic-level explicature, for example by embedding it under a speech-act description (e.g. *promises to . . .*, *bets that . . .*) or a propositional attitude (e.g. *hopes that . . .*, *regrets that . . .*).

For example a speaker, John, uttering: ‘I never paid enough attention to my teachers’ may be communicating the higher-level explicature: *John regrets that he never paid enough attention to his teachers*.

The relevance-theoretic view of speech acts is that some are not communicative acts at all (e.g. naming a ship), while those that are communicative acts can be divided up into (a) those where the speaker intends the hearer to recognize what act the speaker is performing and (b) those where the illocutionary force is not part of the speaker’s meaning.



For such speech acts as betting and promising, where the recognition of the illocutionary force is central to understanding the utterance, there is a higher-level explicature.

John: I am giving up gambling.

Basic-level explicature: *John is giving up gambling.*

Higher-level explicature: *John is promising that he is giving up gambling.*

See also: explicature

## Hole

In work on presuppositions, holes are linguistic items or constructions that do not block presuppositions (in contrast to plugs). For example, the sentence 'John ate all the cake again' is said to presuppose that John had previously eaten all the cake, and that there was (a second lot of) cake. The following examples are said to have the same presuppositions:

John did not eat all the cake again.

Did John eat all the cake again?

It is unlikely that John ate all the cake again.

Mary knows that John ate all the cake again.

For this reason, negation, question formation and embedding under modals such as 'it is unlikely that', 'possibly', 'necessarily', and under factives like 'know', 'point out' are regarded as holes.

See also: filter, plug

## Hyperbole

The figure of speech also known as overstatement, in which a speaker expresses a weaker meaning than his words carry in themselves.

Intuitively, this is a very common figure of speech. People often say 'I am starving' when they mean that they are merely rather hungry, and 'It's miles and miles' is a common way of complaining about even quite short distances.

On a Gricean analysis, a hyperbole is a blatant violation of the first maxim of quality (since, for example, the speaker is not literally starving). Recently

relevance theorists have analysed hyperbole as part of a continuum from strict and literal use through loose use to metaphor.

See also: ad hoc concept, broadening, conversational maxims, figurative speech, understatement

## I-implicature

In neo-Gricean pragmatics, any implicature generated by the I-principle is called an I-implicature. I-implicatures are inferences “from the lack of further specification to the lack of need for it”, as Levinson summarizes it. On the assumption that the speaker will say as little as possible, the hearer should pick the most informative interpretation that is compatible with what the speaker could have intended.

The I-principle is assumed to account for a considerable range of types of implicature, including lexical narrowing, bridging implicatures and negation raising. In these examples the implicature is in italics:

I don't think John came.

*I think that John did not come.* (neg. raising)

Haven't you been to the British Museum? You have to see the Rosetta Stone.

*The Rosetta Stone is in the British Museum.* (bridging)

John has a temperature.

*John has a high temperature.* (lexical narrowing)

John tripped and fell down the stairs.

*John tripped and then, as a result, fell down the stairs.* (lexical narrowing of 'and': 'conjunction buttressing')

I-implicatures tend to recapitulate and elaborate on the proposition expressed. Levinson has proposed that I-implicatures are partially isomorphic with what is said, but more specific than it. In other frameworks some of these pragmatic inferences are instead seen as contributing to the proposition expressed.

See also: M-principle, Q-principle, R-principle

## Illocutionary act

In speech-act theory, an illocutionary act is the act performed in making an utterance, such as promising, asserting, requesting or naming, in contrast to

the locutionary act (the act of saying a certain sentence, with a particular meaning) and the perlocutionary act, which is concerned with the effects of the utterance.

Consider the sentence 'New recruits have to polish their boots twice a day.' One could know the meaning of this indicative sentence and still wonder about the force with which it was uttered. If uttered by a reporter in a news story on the army it might have assertive force. If uttered by the commanding officer in a speech to the new recruits, it would be an order. If a recent graduate of the military academy uttered it to her younger brother, off to follow in her footsteps, it might have the force of advice.

For Austin, who coined the term, illocutionary acts had to be conventionalized in their effects. For example, there are conventions related to the illocutionary act of naming. The naming of a ship creates certain social facts by convention: from then on the ship has a name and people may have to use that name under certain circumstances.

See also: uptake

## Implicated premise

In relevance theory, implicatures are divided into two groups: implicated premises and implicated conclusions. Implicated premises are contextual assumptions, that is, assumptions that the speaker intends the hearer to recover, and which support the conclusions the speaker implicates. The claim is that the implicated premise or premises of an utterance, together with the explicatures, logically warrant the implicated conclusions: hence the use of the terms 'premise' and 'conclusion'. For example:

Abigail: Are you coming out to play football?

Bridget: I've got a lot of work to do today.

Explicature: *Bridget has a lot of work to do today.*

Implicated premise: *If Bridget has a lot of work to do, she is not coming out to play football.*

Implicated conclusion: *Bridget is not coming out to play football.*

See also: implicature

## Implicature

A communicated implication of an utterance. A speaker can intend to mean more by her utterance than what the words that she utters mean, as the philosopher Paul Grice pointed out.

Andy: I think we should get a pet.

Bess: Cats are my favourite animals.

Here Bess's utterance is true if and only if cats are her favourite animals. However, in the context, it is likely that she conveyed more, in making her utterance, than this (and that she intended to do so). She intentionally and openly implied that she and Andy should get a cat (or cats) as pets. Pragmatic theorists would say that she *implicated* that she and Andy should get a cat (or cats) as pets.

*Implicature* and the related verb *implicate* are technical terms coined by Grice to cover what a speaker means in making an utterance beyond what the speaker actually says. On Grice's account, this is a broad area, covering indirect answers to questions (as above), figurative speech such as irony and metaphor, non-logical readings of logical words (e.g. an utterance of 'Some Xs are Y' may implicate that not all are) and much else.

In his theory of conversation, Grice divided implicatures into *conventional* and *conversational*, and subdivided conversational implicatures into *generalized* and *particularized*. All of these types of implicatures are distinct from what is said in that they do not contribute to the truth-conditions of an utterance.

Conversational implicatures, like the one in the example above, are not part of what the words of an utterance mean, but are inferred from what is said. More precisely, they are inferred from the speaker's saying of what is said, that is from the fact that it is said and the way it is put. In Grice's theory of conversation the inference relies on a Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims, discussed below.

In contrast, conventional implicatures are supposed to be carried by particular words. For example, the word 'but' conveys an idea of contrast, but this contrast does not affect the proposition expressed by the utterance. Grice suggested treating such cases as conventional implicatures. These differ con-

siderably from conversational implicatures and are dealt with in their own entry.

Grice also mentioned the possibility that non-conventional implicatures might arise from non-conversational maxims relating to social or moral behaviour and aesthetics, but never elaborated on the point. This entry focuses on conversational implicatures, and from this point on, that is what is meant by the word 'implicature' on its own, as in most writings in pragmatics.

Grice's theory of conversation is an attempt to show how a speaker can implicate and how a hearer can work out what was implicated. Briefly, the account is that rational agents should cooperate in conversation and other talk exchanges: this is the Cooperative Principle. This means that (other things being equal) the speaker will conform to certain standards (the conversational maxims), such as telling the truth and not giving too much nor too little information. When what a speaker says would violate a maxim or maxims if taken as the whole content of what the speaker is communicating, the hearer is entitled to look for some extra meaning beyond what was explicitly said, in order to preserve the assumption that the speaker is being cooperative. The speaker is able to exploit this in a systematic way to convey implicatures. (See the entries on the Cooperative Principle and the conversational maxims for more detail of this account.)

In the example at the beginning of this entry, what is said, taken on its own – that cats are Bess's favourite animals – would violate Grice's maxim of relation. Therefore Bess must also have implicated something that was directly relevant to the conversation, namely that she and Andy should get a cat as a pet.

Conversational implicatures have several interesting properties, most of which were pointed out by Grice when he introduced the term 'implicature', including *calculability*, *cancellability*, *indeterminacy*, *non-detachability* and *non-conventionality*. Among properties that other theorists have noted are *reinforceability* and *universality*.

Non-conventionality is part of the definition of conversational implicatures. That is, they do not stem directly from the encoded/timeless (or as some say 'conventional') meanings of words.

Implicatures are calculable. This property is also a necessary condition for a conversational implicature. By definition, an implicature must be able to be worked out (inferred, in fact) from what is said, and how it was said, and the

fact that it was said. What is said does not in general logically entail the implicature or implicatures (although it may): the relationship is not one of logical deduction. The inference is of the kind called 'inference to the best explanation'. The speaker has said something that on the face of it is irrelevant (or false, or over/under-informative, long-winded etc.). What is the best explanation for this? In many cases the best explanation will be that the speaker intended to convey something more, an implicature. The implicature is worked out on the basis of the hearer's knowledge of the speaker, the conversational situation and the world more generally.

Various pragmatic theories propose different principles from Grice's Cooperative Principle and maxims, but almost all retain the key idea of implicatures as something intentionally conveyed beyond what is actually said, and the notion of calculability, that the relevant intentions of the speaker can be inferred non-demonstratively on the basis of the words uttered and the context.

Implicatures are also non-detachable, with some exceptions. Since they are conveyed by and inferred from what is said, it follows that saying the same thing in a different way will also give rise to the same implicature. For example, if Bess had said 'I prefer cats to dogs and birds' or 'Felines are better than all other animals,' either would have conveyed much the same implicature as what she did say. The exceptions to non-detachability are implicatures that rely on the way that something is said (in Grice's framework, implicatures that rely on maxims of manner).

'Universality' is an obvious extension of non-detachability. Since what matters is what is said in the sense of what proposition is expressed, rather than what words were uttered, it does not matter what language it is said in. Andy and Bess could have been having their conversation in any language from Acehnese to Zulu, and as long as they were expressing roughly the same propositions, Bess would have implicated roughly the same as she did.

Since implicatures are arrived at by inference to the best explanation, not linguistically decoded, they are cancellable. On Grice's account, the assumption that the speaker is being fully cooperative may not hold. One type of cancellation is explicit: the speaker may realize or suspect that what she says will be taken to imply something she does not want to convey and explicitly say that it is not the case. For example, a speaker might say 'I broke a finger yesterday' which would usually implicate that it was one of her own, and then

go on by saying 'But it wasn't one of mine.' It might be better to speak in such cases of deniability rather than cancellability, since it looks as though in these circumstances the speaker is simply denying the truth of something that she implicated accidentally or mischievously.

The second kind of cancellation is contextual cancellation. It is only clear with generalized or default implicatures, and is controversial, since it is controversial whether there are any generalized conversational implicatures. Assume for the sake of argument that utterances that express propositions of the logical form ' $P$  or  $Q$ ' (where  $P$  and  $Q$  are propositions) normally implicate that the speaker does not know whether  $P$  or  $Q$  (e.g. an utterance of 'John lives in Bloomsbury or Fitzrovia' implicates that the speaker does not know which). In contexts in which it is clear that the speaker will not aim to be maximally informative the implicature may not arise. For example, in a treasure hunt the organizer tells the participants 'The prize is either in the house or in the garden.' No implicature is conveyed that she does not know which is the case.

What is controversial here is whether it is ever better to treat such cases as involving cancellation of a normally present implicature or whether it is better simply to say that in this context no such implicature arises. Grice allowed for the former with his category of generalized conversational implicatures. A generalized conversational implicature of saying that  $P$  (where  $P$  is some proposition) is one that is normally carried by saying that  $P$ , that is in all but special circumstances. (See separate entry on generalized conversational implicature.)

For the same reason that implicatures (and other pragmatically inferred material) are deniable, they are reinforceable. That is, a speaker can usually follow up an utterance that has an implicature by an assertion reinforcing what she implicated without much of a feeling of infelicitous redundancy. In uttering the first sentence, the speaker communicates, but does not explicitly say that she broke her own finger:

I broke a finger yesterday. One of mine, I mean.

Compare this with the odd effect of attempting to reinforce part of what is explicitly said:

?? I broke a finger yesterday. It was a finger.



The indeterminacy of implicatures is one final property that follows from the fact that implicatures are worked out by inference to the best explanation. There may be several possible explanations, in which case what is implicated is one of these specific explanations. The list of possible explanations may be indeterminately large. In such cases what is implicated will be open in the sense that it is indeterminate. This sort of pragmatic indeterminacy can be seen in poetic effects.

Implicature may be of great importance to the study of non-verbal communication, where most gestures, unlike words, do not have any intrinsic meaning.

In Grice's work on meaning, he was clear that gestures that do not have any timeless or conventional meaning can nonetheless be used to convey particular speaker meanings on particular occasions. For example, a little push might convey that the pusher wants the pushee to leave, if and only if the recipient of the push can work out that this is what the producer of the push meant by it. At what level is this meaning conveyed? It cannot be at the level of what is said, because a little push has no encoded/timeless meaning. That apparently only leaves the possibility that what is conveyed here is implicated. It is assumed in relevance theory that what is communicated by gestures with no encoded meaning is communicated at the level of implicature.

In retrospect, particularized (conversational) implicatures have been the most successful aspect of Grice's theory of conversation. All of the other major proposals of the theory – the maxims and the Cooperative Principle, generalized implicatures and conventional implicatures – have been seriously challenged, and no one of them is accepted in all major pragmatic theories. Particularized implicatures are the only level of meaning beyond the proposition expressed that is accepted by just about everyone working in pragmatics.

Putting it this way brings out something important about the concept of implicatures that has not been discussed up to this point. Implicatures are representational. Like what is said, they are propositional: they have truth-conditions (although implicatures do not contribute to the truth-conditions of the utterance). So to postulate implicatures is to postulate a level of representation; it is to claim that communication takes place on two levels. This is Grice's extrapolation from the apparently obvious fact that speakers can mean more than – or something different from – what they say.

See also: conventional implicature, figurative speech, generalized conversational implicature

## Implicature

An enrichment or completion of what is said; part of what is communicated by an utterance, but neither an implicature nor part of what is said. The notion of implicature was introduced by the philosopher Kent Bach, as a refinement of Grice's view and an alternative to relevance theory's *explicature*.

Implicatures are also called *conversational implicatures*, because, like conversational implicatures, they are part of what is inferentially communicated in a particular context, rather than due to conventional meanings of the words uttered. Implicatures are implied by what is said (and its saying), but implicatures are *implicit in* what is said, and are built up from it by filling in or adding content.

In the following examples, the material added is in brackets:

John has had breakfast {today}

Mary has nothing {suitable for the party} to wear {to the party}

See also: explicature, implicature, what is said

## Indeterminacy

A property of conversational implicatures and other material that is pragmatically inferred. Conversational implicatures are worked out by inference to the best explanation of a speaker's communicative behaviour: she said *p*, but this on its own would not be as cooperative/informative/relevant as expected, so the hearer is entitled to assume that the speaker was implicating *q*. There may be many different acceptable explanations of this sort for any given utterance. Insofar as this is so and insofar as the list of possible explanations is open-ended, then what is implicated will be indeterminate to some degree.

Other material recovered by pragmatic inference (e.g. Bach's *implicature*, relevance theory's *explicature*) is also indeterminate for the same reason. In relevance theory indeterminacy is described in terms of manifestness. Infer-

ential communication raises the manifestness of certain assumptions. Since manifestness is a matter of degree, communication of each assumption may be more or less strong. In weak communication, a range of assumptions are made slightly more manifest.

Pragmatic indeterminacy, as described here, should not be confused with what is sometimes called Quinean indeterminacy: the idea that there is no fact of the matter about what a certain word, sentence or utterance means.

See also: abductive inference, calculability, manifestness, weak communication

## Indexicalism

The hypothesis that for every component of the proposition expressed by an utterance there is a corresponding component in the linguistic structure of the sentence uttered. This amounts to the denial that there is any free pragmatic enrichment, and a commitment to treat all apparent cases of enrichment in terms of ellipsis or the pragmatic provision of values for hidden variables.

For example 'John is tall' is treated as having a variable that is contextually filled (Tall for a basketball player; a two-year old; a giraffe?). A more controversial case is 'It is raining,' argued to contain a variable for place, on the grounds that binding is possible: 'Everywhere John goes it rains' can mean that it rains at each place John goes to, rather than that it rains in (e.g.) London wherever John goes.

Indexicalism gives considerable ground to inferential pragmatics. Pragmatic inference would be required to determine whether hidden variables are saturated or left unsaturated, what their values are, and what elements were elided, if any.

A serious problem for indexicalism is that there is no syntactic evidence for most of the multitude of hidden variables that would be needed.

Fragments may also be problematic. According to indexicalism, an utterance of 'Water!' is either an utterance of a sentence with many silent words such as '(Please give me some) water!', '(I need) water!' etc. (but which?) or just an expressive noise like 'Wow!' or 'Ouch!'

See also: fragment, free enrichment, indexical

## Indexicality

One kind of context-sensitivity in meaning: the kind that is due to words or phrases called *indexicals* that act as placeholders for information from the context. Indexical elements of languages are those elements like pronouns and demonstratives that take from context the values that they contribute to the truth-conditions of the utterance. The sentence that follows has several indexical elements:

He gave that to me a week ago, just here.

Reading this example out of context we do not know who gave what to whom, nor when, nor where. We can infer, though, that the gift was given a week before the sentence was uttered and that it was given by one male person to the speaker of the utterance, in roughly the same place as the utterance was made (or at least that the speaker is speaking as though committed to those facts: of course he might be mistaken or speaking ironically).

Indexicals encode certain constraints on the contribution they make to the meaning conveyed – ‘he’ must pick out a singular male animate individual, for example – without determining that contribution in the way that, for example, using a name like ‘Noam Chomsky’ would. In a suitable context, ‘He arrived’ can mean that Noam Chomsky arrived; in another context it can mean that Paul Grice arrived. The sentence ‘Noam Chomsky arrived’ is not context-sensitive in the same way.

One well-known way of expressing the idea that indexicals encode constraints is to divide their meaning into character and content. On this conception, the character is the encoded meaning of the indexical and, together with the context, determines the content, which is the contribution that the indexical linguistic item makes to the proposition expressed.

The term ‘indexical sign’ (usually abbreviated to ‘indexical’) was coined by the philosopher Charles Pierce, although his term covered a wider range of expressions than are now regarded as indexical. Interest in the phenomenon predates the term. An influential theory of indexicality *avant la lettre* in the philosophy of language was Bertrand Russell’s claim that all indexicals can be paraphrased by statements containing only one indexical element, the word ‘this’, so that (for example) ‘I’ would mean ‘the person who is experiencing this’.

Some theorists divide indexicals into two classes. One class, the pure indexicals, have straightforward rules that determine the contribution they make to the proposition expressed, with no need to appeal to speaker intentions. For example, on this account, 'I' always contributes the speaker of the utterance, 'you' the addressee, 'now' the time of the utterance and 'here' its place. This proposal is incorrect for 'here' and 'now'. Sitting at my desk in Oslo, I might utter 'here' to mean the vicinity of my desk, my study, downtown Oslo, greater Oslo, Norway, or even Europe, and similarly the referent of 'now' might be this second, today, this year, or in certain contexts, the geologically modern period. For example: 'In the Triassic there was a rainforest here, but now we have a very cool temperate climate.' Some expressions are still argued to be pure indexicals: for example 'I', and 'yesterday'.

In linguistics indexicality is often discussed under the heading of *deixis*, although deixis is not quite the same as indexicality, since it includes all sensitivity of meaning to context, while use of the term *indexicality* is usually reserved for context-sensitivity that affects truth-conditions. Another difference is that indexicality includes some cases that are often seen as cross-sentential anaphora, as in the examples below, but deixis is defined as non-anaphoric use.

In pragmatics and psycholinguistics, interest has been focused on reference assignment. The question here is how a hearer works out the correct referent of a certain indexical. A widely accepted assumption is that what makes an entity the correct referent is that it is the one that the speaker intended to refer to. According to this view, reference assignment is a pragmatic, inferential task.

On the assumption that some pragmatic inference, such as the derivation of implicatures, is guided by maxims or principles, two questions arise. First, is reference assignment also governed by principles, and if so, secondly, are they the same principles that are operative in implicature derivation?

Several theorists have pointed out that Grice's maxims of conversation could be used to perform reference assignment and disambiguation, although Grice did not discuss the point, simply assuming that reference must be assigned to indexical terms in order to arrive at what is said by an utterance. The reasoning would be similar to the reasoning involved in reaching an implicature. For example: *The speaker has said 'He is a great linguist'. We have just been discussing Chomsky and no one else, so the speaker knows*

*that Chomsky will come to mind as the referent of 'he'. The speaker has given me no reason to think that she did not mean to refer to Chomsky, so she has referred to Chomsky in using 'he' and said that Chomsky is a great linguist.*

One reason to treat reference assignment as covered by the same principles as recovery of implicit meaning is that recovery of a referent is also sensitive to world knowledge and specifics of the particular situation.

Consider the problem of determining the referent for the pronoun 'he' in the examples below, assuming that it is anaphoric on, or simply co-referential with either 'a policeman' or 'John'.

- (a) A policeman arrested John yesterday. He had just stolen a wallet.
- (b) A policeman arrested John yesterday. He had needed one more arrest to qualify for the end-of-year bonus.
- (c) A policeman arrested John yesterday. He had just taken a bribe.

The hearer has to work out which referent the speaker intended. One important factor is the accessibility of the referents. Psycholinguistic work has shown that various factors compete in influencing the accessibility. The subject of a sentence is prominent, so the referent of 'a policeman' has an advantage, but 'John' is closer to 'he' than the subject, so John may be a more accessible referent on that count. In example (a), the decisive factor appears to be the predicate 'steal a wallet', which may raise the accessibility of a stereotype or frame in which policemen attempt to catch criminals, thus making John the more accessible candidate for the remaining role in the frame, the culprit. In a similar way – although the knowledge involved is less stereotypical – the policeman may be the more accessible referent in (b).

However the results on a particular occasion may depend on what is known about that particular occasion. If the remark follows conversation about a recent crackdown on corruption, then John might be the more accessible referent in (c) – unless the crackdown was on corruption in the police.

See also character/content distinction, deixis, reference assignment

## Indirect speech

When a speaker reports what another speaker says (or what she herself said at another time) without claiming (implicitly or explicitly) to be giving a verba-

tim report, that is an instance of indirect speech, also known as reported speech and by its Latin name, *oratio obliqua*. For example:

Mary: John said that pragmatics is boring.

Indirect speech reports claim to resemble the speech reported to some degree, which can vary from an exact word-for-word match to a rough summary or a claim about the gist of what a speaker conveyed, or something that a speaker mentioned in passing. Thus Mary's report would be true if what John actually said was 'Pragmatics is boring,' or if he said in a pragmatics class 'I find all this stuff frankly tedious.'

In indirect speech the point of reference for deixis is usually that of the time and place of the reporting utterance, not that of the reported utterance. For example, an utterance of 'You came to me yesterday' might be reported as: 'John said that I had come to him the day before.'

See also: direct speech

## Indirect speech act

An utterance which achieves a certain illocutionary force without 'wearing it on its sleeve' is an indirect speech act. For example, it is possible to request the butter by uttering the interrogative sentence, 'Can you pass the butter?' The grammatical form of this sentence is more closely associated with asking questions than making requests, so this is an indirect speech act. Indirect speech acts are common, perhaps the norm. The most obvious direct way of making a request is to say something like 'I request that . . .'. In English this is uncommon; most requests at least are made by indirect speech acts.

The use of indirect speech acts depends partly on inference, partly on knowledge of how the language is typically used in a certain culture. 'Can you pass the butter?' could be a real question: the butter might be heavy and the addressee physically weak, for example. So context-sensitive inference is required to determine the intended illocutionary force. In some cases, the hearer will be helped by his knowledge of linguistic and cultural conventions: 'Can you . . .', 'Could you . . .' and 'Would it be possible for you to . . .' are conventional ways of framing requests. 'Are you able to . . .' is not.

See also: direct speech act

## Information structure

The study of information structure is the investigation of the way in which information is organized in sentences and dialogues, particularly the ways that new and old information are presented and distinguished.

It is common to make a distinction between *topic* and *comment* (or *theme* and *rheme*), where the topic is (roughly) what is being talked about and the comment is what is said about it. Sentence structure and other linguistic factors such as intonation and stress are manipulated to mark the sentence topic. In discourse, continuation of topic and change of topic are often marked linguistically.

See also: topic and comment

## Informative intention

According to relevance theory, a speaker making an utterance has two intentions: the informative intention and the communicative intention. The informative intention is the intention to convey a certain piece of information or certain pieces of information, that is, in relevance-theoretic terminology, to increase the manifestness of a set of assumptions to the hearer.

For example, Albert and Brenda are lingering over breakfast, and Albert says:

It's nine o'clock.

Albert's informative intention might be to make more manifest to Brenda the fact that it is nine o'clock (an explicature of the utterance) and to make manifest to Brenda that it is time for her to leave for work (an implicature).

See also: communicative intention

## Interpretive use

In relevance theory, a distinction is made between descriptive and interpretive use. In descriptive use the utterance is intended to be relevant as a representation of a state of affairs. In interpretive use, the utterance is intended to be relevant as a representation of an assumption which it resembles in



content: either (a) another's thought or utterance (an attributed representation) or (b) a thought that it would be desirable to represent.

Alan: What did Mary say about the weather?

Bertha: It will be rainy tomorrow.

Bertha's utterance would probably be taken as interpretive (and attributive), that is, as reporting what Mary said (rather than giving her own opinion, which would be descriptive use). In that case, Bertha has no commitment to the proposition she has expressed and is not even putting it forward as true. What she is committed to is that the proposition she has expressed resembles to some degree what Mary said.

Resemblance between assumptions is defined in relevance theory as the sharing of analytic logical entailments and contextual implications. It is a matter of degree, since two assumptions may share all implications or none or fall at any point in between.

Mary's original utterance might have been "It will rain tomorrow", or "More rain!" or she might have given a lengthy monologue on the forthcoming weather. Various kinds of resemblance are possible in interpretive use, including more or less literal reproduction, summary or even amplification.

See also: attributive concept, irony

## Intonation

Meaningful variation in the pitch of speech sounds (excluding the use of pitch in tone languages to encode distinctions between words). Intonation is one factor in prosody.

Speakers of all languages use pitch variation to convey aspects of their meaning. In many languages, for example, a change in sentence intonation can transform an assertion into a question, a fact of obvious relevance to speech-act theory. Even an isolated word can be a question or an exclamation, depending on intonation:

Really?

Really!

Intonation is also a sign of emotions such as joy and surprise. Typically, larger variations in pitch correspond to stronger emotions. Thus large pitch

variation appears to be a natural sign of strong emotion and is produced unconsciously and unintentionally. It can also be intentionally used, sometimes in an exaggerated form, to communicate emotion.

See also: natural and nonnatural meaning, prosody, sign

## I-principle

In neo-Gricean pragmatics, the I-principle or Informativeness-principle is one of a small number of principles that govern communicative behaviour. The I-principle enjoins speakers to say as little as necessary (while bearing in mind the opposing Q-principle). If a speaker's utterance appears to be governed by the I-principle, then the hearer can take it that the speaker expressed herself economically and can take the utterance as implicating information that is more specific than what is said, along stereotypical or expected lines. However, when marked expressions are used the M-principle comes into play.

The I-principle in Levinson's neo-Gricean system approximately corresponds to Horn's R-principle. The R-principle and the I-principle are alike in that they are both minimization principles, and they give rise to lower-bounding implicatures.

See also: I-implicature, M-principle, Q-principle, R-principle

## Irony

A figure of speech seen in the following example:

Alistair (stepping out into heavy rain): Another lovely day!

There is no generally accepted definition of verbal irony. The classical conception of irony is that it is a figure of speech in which the speaker means the opposite of what her words mean, and this has been taken as defining. However this condition is neither necessary nor sufficient for irony. For example, someone sees a car with a broken window and, attempting to draw attention to it in an ironic way says, 'Look! That car hasn't got a broken window' (Grice's example). Intuitively, this utterance would not succeed in being ironic (in most contexts at least).

There are also clear cases of irony where what is ironically meant is not the opposite of what the sentence uttered means. Ironic understatement is com-

mon, but in understatement the speaker does not usually mean the opposite of what her words say, but something stronger. For example, a person leaving a very poor film is asked how it was and replies 'I've occasionally enjoyed some films more.' She does not mean that she has never enjoyed any films more, but that she has rarely enjoyed a film less.

There are other types of example in which a speaker also does not mean the opposite of what she says. A speaker may utter 'Our friends are always there when they need us' ironically and in doing so endorse the sentiment expressed by the sentence, as the linguist Robert Martin points out. Here the utterance is a distorted echo of the proverb 'Our friends are always there when we need them.'

The most influential account of irony is due to Grice. On the classical definition, ironic utterances blatantly violate Grice's first quality maxim: Do not say what you believe to be false. On the assumption that the speaker is nonetheless being cooperative, it can be inferred that there is a related implicature.

As well as inheriting the problems of the classical definition of irony, Grice's account also leaves unanswered a number of other questions: How is the implicature worked out, and why should it be the opposite of what the speaker seemed to say? If this is a rule that speakers must learn, why is irony culturally universal?

Grice suggested, but did not explore, the idea that irony might be a form of pretence, an account taken up and developed by other theorists. The idea is that the speaker pretends to have an attitude which he does not have and in fact finds ridiculous, expecting the hearer to be able to see through the pretence. As developed by the linguists Herbert Clark and Richard Gerrig, the idea is that the speaker pretends 'to be an injudicious person speaking to an uninitiated audience'. The actual audience is assumed to be wiser.

Another influential account is Sperber and Wilson's theory that irony is the tacit, interpretive attribution of an utterance or thought, accompanied by a tacitly dissociative attitude to that thought or utterance. In interpretive use an utterance is used to report another utterance or thought which it resembles. That an utterance is interpretive may be marked linguistically, or it may be left implicit for the speaker to infer from the context. In irony it is implicit. A speaker may also intend to communicate an attitude towards the attributed thought or utterance, and this attitude may be explicit or implicit. In irony this, too, is left implicit. According to this account, the hearer of an ironic utterance has to infer without linguistic cues that the utterance does not report

the speaker's own belief, and that there is a dissociative attitude towards the attributed content. Clearly this account is compatible with the observation that irony is a very risky, easily misunderstood figure of speech.

This theory does not share the problems of the classical Gricean account of irony. In conjunction with the Communicative Principle of relevance, this account of irony predicts that a speaker cannot make an ironic utterance to convey only the opposite of what the words mean, since inferring that an utterance is ironic is costly and a speaker who simply wanted to mean 'It is a horrible day' should have said that instead. Rather, this theory predicts what is commonly observed: that ironic utterances always serve some rhetorical purpose that would not have been served by speaking more literally.

This account also predicts, correctly, that many ironic utterances are quotations or near-quotations, including distorted quotations such as 'Our friends are always there when we need them' and Wilde's 'Work is the curse of the drinking classes.' One criticism of this theory has been that it requires that ironic utterances of sentiments that have not been uttered or thought in the context, such as 'It's a lovely day,' be treated as echoing common hopes or wishes. However there is some support for this view from the fact that it is much harder to successfully utter 'What a horrible day!' ironically (e.g. on stepping out into bright sunshine), presumably since wishes for horrible weather are less salient.

The terminology around the subject of irony can be confusing. In North American English, the word 'sarcasm' is often used as a synonym for verbal irony. In British English, sarcasm is mocking or contemptuous irony. Sarcasm is also sometimes taken to be irony whose target is the addressee of the ironic utterance.

This entry has discussed verbal irony, the figure of speech, ignoring what is known as tragic, dramatic or situational irony, where someone's actions or words are, unknown to that person, unexpectedly inappropriate or futile: for example, a man decides not to go on holiday because he is afraid of flying and is killed by an aeroplane falling on his house. It is a matter of debate whether the use of the term *irony* for both the verbal and the tragic is a historical accident or they are in some sense two forms of one phenomenon.

See also: etiolation of language, figurative speech, interpretive use, conversational maxims

## Language of thought hypothesis

The proposal that the medium of thought is a structured, hierarchical representational system similar in that respect to natural language, but distinct from it. According to this hypothesis, when someone is thinking, for example, that *Clara is not vegetarian*, he has a sentence in the language of thought in his mind which corresponds to that thought, having separate components that represent Clara, negation and the property of being vegetarian, and a structure that unambiguously encodes the non-predication of vegetarianism to Clara.

The Language of Thought is assumed to be universal: that is possessed by all normal humans, regardless of their native natural language.

An alternative name for the Language of Thought is *mentalese*. Pragmatic theorists who accept the Language of Thought hypothesis see utterance interpretation as starting with natural language input and ending with propositions in mentalese.

See also: mental representation

## Lexical ambiguity

One of two different types of ambiguity. Lexical ambiguity occurs when an utterance contains a word that has a homonym. Homonyms are words with different meanings but which have the same linguistic form. In English the words *bat* (flying rodent) and *bat* (piece of sports equipment) are homonyms. So this is lexically ambiguous:

Fred got his bat out of the shed.

Homonyms can be divided into homophones and homographs. Homophones are words with different meanings and the same pronunciation (but not necessarily the same spelling). They give rise to lexical ambiguity in spoken utterances. Homographs are words with different meanings and the same spelling (but not necessarily the same pronunciation). They give rise to lexical ambiguity in written utterances.

Lexical ambiguity is sometimes hard to distinguish from polysemy. For example, in the following (pragmatically odd) sentence is 'expire' ambiguous or polysemous?

?? John and his driving licence both expired on Tuesday.

See also: ambiguity, disambiguation, structural ambiguity

## Lexical modulation

This is a general term which covers different types of pragmatic effect on the meanings that lexical items are used to convey. Lexical modulation is when the meaning contributed by a word to the utterance meaning differs from the stable lexically encoded meaning of the word. This is *not* meant to include the effects of indexicality, where it is part of the encoded meaning of words like pronouns that they contribute different referents in different contexts.

The term 'lexical modulation' is non-committal about the principles or mechanisms involved. The main utility of the term is that it covers both broadening and narrowing of word meaning, and perhaps other phenomena. The use of 'bird' to convey turkey or goose in an utterance such as 'A well-roasted bird is a Christmas essential' can be seen as lexical narrowing. Broadening includes such examples as use of a trade name such as 'Kleenex' for generic items of the type, and ordinary loose use: for example *The Earth is 93 million miles from the sun*. Lexical modulation includes all such cases and perhaps also hyperbole, understatement, metaphor and metonymy.

See also: broadening, narrowing

## Lexical pragmatics

The study of the way that speaker's intentions affect the meanings conveyed by words in context. What is conveyed by the use of a word depends on the linguistic and non-linguistic context.

In Searle's famous examples, 'cut' receives different interpretations in 'John cut the cake' and 'John cut the grass.' One might argue that 'cut' is ambiguous, but consideration of further examples suggests that the number of senses would have to be enormous. It is not possible to derive the different senses within linguistic semantics by composition of the meanings of 'cut' and its object, given that the sense chosen is also sensitive to non-linguistic context: for example, suppose that you know that only scissors are available, but John is determined to cut the cake and the grass nonetheless.

Such considerations have prompted the founding of lexical pragmatics as a sub-field of pragmatics. As well as the kind of modulation of word meaning seen with 'cut', lexical pragmatics is concerned with polysemy, metaphor and metonymy. The aim is to explain how speakers and hearers coordinate on what is meant by using a particular word in a given utterance.

See also: broadening, lexical modulation, linguistic meaning, linguistic underdeterminacy thesis, metaphor, metonymy, Modified Occam's razor, narrowing, polysemy

## Lie

Lies are deliberately false statements. They are typically intended to deceive. This distinguishes them from metaphors and exaggerations which are not lies even though they might be strictly and literally false and known to be so by the speaker. A speaker who says 'I'm starving' hyperbolically or 'Lawyers are piranhas' as a metaphor does not intend her hearer to think that she is literally dying from lack of food or that lawyers are literally a type of fish.

Lies are analysed in a Gricean framework as covert violations of a maxim of truthfulness, whereas metaphor and hyperbole are overt violations. In lying, the speaker knowingly violates the maxim, 'Do not say what you believe to be false' and intends that the violation not be noticed. In relevance theory, lies are one case in which the speaker intends her utterance to seem relevant rather than to be relevant.

See also: hyperbole, metaphor, conversational maxims, sophisticated understanding

## Linguistic meaning

The meaning possessed by linguistic items abstracting away from context, in contrast to utterance meaning. Linguists call this *linguistic meaning* or *encoded meaning*. For words and other lexical items, it is the meaning stored in the mental lexicon. For phrases, assuming that compositionality holds, it is the meaning obtained by putting together the meanings of the words in accordance with the way the phrase is structured.

One characterization of pragmatics is as the study of how (and why) what speakers communicate goes beyond the linguistic meaning of the phrase or sentence uttered.

See also: meaning, speaker meaning, timeless meaning

## Linguistic underdeterminacy thesis

This expression (and also the related expressions 'semantic underdeterminacy thesis' and 'underdeterminacy thesis') is used for several distinct but related hypotheses. One of these is that no sentences, or very few, encode a unique proposition: there are no 'eternal sentences', or only a small proportion of sentences are 'eternal'. A second version is that in all or most cases when a sentence is uttered, what is encoded by the sentence falls short of the proposition expressed by the speaker. Both claims are controversial. The second is now generally acknowledged to be of central importance to pragmatics, and it is this version that is discussed here.

There are at least two further senses in which the linguistic material in an utterance does not fully determine the import of the utterance. First, the linguistic material uttered, and indeed the proposition expressed, underdetermine the illocutionary force of an utterance. Secondly, the linguistic material uttered and the proposition expressed underdetermine speaker meaning or what is communicated. This is generally accepted since conversational implicatures cannot be decoded but must be inferred, and they are not entailed by the proposition expressed. (On this point, see the entry on implicature.)

Returning to the linguistic underdeterminacy thesis proper, there is general agreement that for a hearer to arrive at the proposition expressed, reference must be assigned to indexicals and ambiguities must be resolved in examples like (a).

- (a) I decided to sell the bat here last week.

The linguistic underdeterminacy thesis is the claim that, even abstracting away from indexicals and ambiguity, the proposition expressed by the speaker in uttering a sentence goes beyond the linguistic meaning of the sentence. Typical examples are given in (b) to (e), with questions that the sentences leave open in parentheses:

- (b) John is ready. (What for?)  
(c) It is raining. (Where?)  
(d) John has eaten. (What? How much? When: this evening? today? in his lifetime?)  
(e) This pen is red. (Red exterior or red ink, or . . . ?)



Most theorists agree that some kind of completion or enrichment is needed before (b) has full truth-conditions. Whether or not (c) encodes a full proposition is controversial. In any case, on most, but perhaps not all occasions of use the location in which it is raining must be pragmatically inferred.

Many would say that the linguistic material in (d) is enough for full truth-conditions, but the proposition expressed by the speaker is unlikely to be the one that the sentence encodes: that John has eaten, full-stop, that is that he has eaten something at some point before the present moment. The sentence in (e) illustrates a different kind of context-sensitivity. By 'a red pen' a speaker may mean one that makes red marks or one that is red on the outside, or, in certain contexts various other things: for example, one that has a red band on an otherwise silver casing.

Such examples have convinced many that the linguistic underdeterminacy thesis is correct and that generally sentences uttered must be enriched by pragmatic inference to arrive at the proposition expressed, a view sometimes known as 'radical pragmatics'. Other theorists, 'indexicalists', claim that all such examples should be explained as the pragmatic provision of values to linguistically encoded slots or variables, as in (a). On this account these variables would be present but unpronounced in examples like (b)–(e).

On either view, the proposition expressed by a speaker cannot be read off the sentence uttered, so it must be inferred partly on the basis of the sentence uttered, but also taking into account background knowledge and other clues to the speaker's intentions.

See also: context, explication, free enrichment, proposition expressed, propositional radical

## Literal use

When the words used by a speaker are used with their basic, linguistically encoded meaning we say that they are used literally, or equally that they are used with their literal meaning.

Literal use is in contrast with figurative use, including irony and metaphor. It is not clear, however, that there is any sharp literal/figurative distinction. There are two grey areas. First, encoded or conventional non-literality: for example 'He is a bit unhinged.' The meaning 'mentally unbalanced' for 'unhinged' is a metaphor historically, but is now an encoded sense of the

word (and by far the more frequent one). Secondly, strict and literal use of words shades into loose use, which shades into hyperbole. Is 'France is hexagonal' literally true or false?

Grice's first maxim of quality enjoins truthfulness at the level of what is said and comes close to being a maxim of literal truthfulness. Bach and Harnish postulate a presumption of literal meaning. Sperber and Wilson have argued on the contrary that there is no maxim or presumption of literal truthfulness.

See also: figurative speech

## Locutionary act

In speech-act theory, the act of saying something, in contrast to illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, which are concerned with the function of the utterance and its effects.

The idea is that one piece of behaviour can be analysed as several different actions. For example, a pianist pressing his fingers on the keyboard in a certain way might be intentionally playing a G major chord, playing (part of) a Bach sonata and moving his audience to tears. Similarly speech-act theory identifies several levels of action in each utterance. The locutionary act is the basic-level act of saying a sentence with a particular sense and reference. This can be decomposed into three components: the act of making certain speech sounds (a phonic act) and saying certain words and phrases (a phatic act), with the intention of referring to certain entities (a rhetic act). These three components correspond to the traditional three-way division in linguistics between phonetics/phonology, syntax and semantics.

See also: illocutionary act, perlocutionary act, phatic act, phonic act, rhetic act, speech acts

## Loose use

Often a statement is not false but imprecise enough that it is not clear whether it is strictly, literally true, as in Austin's famous example 'France is hexagonal'. This is not entirely false, but it is far from being precise. In some contexts it would be acceptable as 'true enough'. This phenomenon, loose use, is very common. A speaker who says 'I live sixty miles from London' does not mean that he lives at exactly that distance, but is probably committed to 60 being closer to the correct figure than 50.

Loose use is often treated in terms of the idea that in different contexts, different standards of precision may apply. While that may be true, it does not capture the extent to which speakers tailor the degree of looseness to the interests of the hearer. As Deirdre Wilson has pointed out, it will be acceptable to say 'The lecture begins at ten,' knowing that lectures always start at five past the hour, but it would not be acceptable if the speaker knows that lectures start 5 minutes before the hour.

Intuitively, loose use is intermediate between strict and literal use and figurative speech (for example, hyperbole and metaphor). In relevance theory it is claimed that all of these phenomena can be explained in terms of lexical modulation guided by a unitary interpretation process.

See also: broadening, lexical pragmatics

## Manifestness

In relevance theory, manifestness is the degree to which an assumption is accessible in a context. Assumptions may be accessible on the basis of perception or of inference.

An assumption is manifest to a given individual at a certain time if and only if that individual is capable at that time of representing the assumption mentally and accepting that representation as true or probably true. The assumption need not in fact be true: false assumptions can be entertained as true. Therefore manifestness is a weaker notion than knowledge.

Manifestness is a matter of degree. The more likely an assumption is to be entertained, the more highly manifest it is.

A set of assumptions that is manifest to an individual is that individual's *cognitive environment*. A set of assumptions shared between two or more individuals is a *shared cognitive environment*.

A shared cognitive environment in which it is manifest which people share it is a *mutual cognitive environment*. In a mutual cognitive environment, all manifest assumptions are *mutually manifest*.

Mutual manifestness plays a role in relevance theory analogous to the role that some other pragmatic theorists have assigned to mutual knowledge: it explains how speaker and hearer can coordinate on an interpretation of an utterance.

See also: mutual knowledge

## Markedness

The extent to which an item in a language is out-of-the-ordinary. Unmarked items are normal, whereas marked items are relatively unusual. For example, the word 'kine' is marked, while the word 'cattle' is relatively unmarked. The idea that some linguistic items are more natural and common than others was an important feature of the linguistic theory of Roman Jakobson.

In pragmatics, it has been argued that an utterance containing marked items should have a marked meaning.

See also: division of pragmatic labour

## Massive modularity

The hypothesis that the human mind is largely or completely made up of specialized units dedicated to particular tasks or functions, just as the body is composed of separate organs. Another parallel is with modern computers which have many computer programs each of which is written to carry out a specific task or tasks. One controversial aspect of the theory is that it denies that there is a non-modular capacity for general inference and reasoning.

If the mind is massively modular then human communication ability is a strong candidate to be a module or a group of related modules.

The massive modularity hypothesis is a key idea in evolutionary psychology. The term 'massive modularity' was coined by Dan Sperber, who is an evolutionary psychologist as well as one of the co-founders of relevance theory.

See also: relevance theory, relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure

## Meaning

Pragmatics claims meaning as its subject matter, as do linguistic and philosophical semantics. In pragmatics the focus is on meaning in context and meaning in use: what speakers mean by their utterances.

Meaning is notoriously difficult to define. Philosophers discuss what it is for an entity such as a word, sentence, utterance or thought to mean something and how such entities differ from other entities such as rocks and protons, which do not have meaning (at least not in the intended sense of the word). Typically, pragmatics and linguistic semantics take a more modest approach, explaining meaning at one level in terms of meaning at another level.

Pragmatics is concerned with how (a) speakers can mean various things by their utterances, and (b) hearers can grasp what was meant. This is the area addressed by the philosopher Paul Grice in his theory of meaning: what is necessary for a speaker to mean something by an utterance? In pragmatics it is mostly taken for granted both that words and phrases have linguistic meaning and that what a speaker meant may have to be explained in terms of certain of her thoughts (which themselves have meaning) such as what she intended to communicate.

Pre-theoretically, we have the intuition that in some cases a speaker means just what she says. In other cases, we feel that she means something more than what she says, or something different from it. This is the area of Grice's theory of conversation: how can a speaker mean something different by her utterance from what the words mean? Pragmatic theories, Gricean or otherwise, aim to systematically explain these intuitions about what speakers mean, and to integrate them with an account of communication.

The following distinctions between different types or aspects of meaning are all in use within pragmatics:

speaker meaning/linguistically encoded or timeless meaning  
utterance meaning/sentence meaning  
explicit/implicit meaning  
encoded/inferred meaning  
truth-conditional/non-truth conditional (aspects of) meaning  
dictive/formal aspects of meaning  
conceptual or representational meaning/procedural meaning  
meaning/illocutionary force  
natural/nonnatural meaning

For the last four entries on this list, see the separate entries on the *dictiveness/formality distinction*, *procedural meaning*, the *meaning/force distinction* and *natural meaning and nonnatural meaning*. The other concepts in the list are discussed below.

The distinction between *speaker meaning* and *linguistically encoded meaning* (or '*timeless*' meaning in Grice's terminology) is fundamental to pragmatics, since a basic concern of pragmatics is to describe and explain the difference and similarity between the two. Most pragmatic theorists follow Grice in accepting that speaker meaning is a matter of speaker intentions: what did the speaker intend to convey by saying these words at this time, in this situation, in this way? The answer is the speaker meaning (see also the separate entry on speaker meaning). Some have felt, though, that speaker meaning is such a nebulous or multi-vocal concept that a better subject for systematic investigation is what is communicated, or what the speaker intended to convey. In either case, most would follow Grice in making a division into at least two levels: what is said (or the proposition expressed, or the basic-level explicature) and what is (conversationally) implicated.

Many would also add one or more of the following levels to the list of potential components of what a speaker conveys by her utterance: higher-level explicatures, implicature, presuppositions and conventional implicatures.

The distinction between *utterance meaning* and *sentence meaning* is essentially the same as the distinction between speaker meaning and linguistic meaning. Speaker meaning or utterance meaning clearly outstrips sentence meaning because utterances, not sentences, have implicatures. In addition, many sentences fall short of expressing a unique proposition, but a speaker saying a sentence usually intends to express a proposition. To know what proposition the speaker is expressing, the hearer has at least to assign referents to indexical terms and disambiguate any ambiguous expressions. There is debate about how much further pragmatic, inferential work is generally needed to arrive at the proposition expressed. Many pragmatic theorists subscribe to the linguistic underdeterminacy thesis, which is that typically the sentence uttered underdetermines the proposition expressed.

The distinction between *explicit* and *implicit* meaning has already been assumed in this discussion, in the claim that some of what speakers mean beyond what their words mean is in the form of implicatures. That is, one component of the utterance meaning is implied by the speaker's saying of what she said, and is not explicitly present in what is said. Most theorists agree with Grice that implicatures must be worked out inferentially, because they are not explicit: they cannot be read off the words used. Other elements of what is conveyed also cannot be read off the linguistic material: referents of pronouns, for example, and completion of the idea only partly encoded in a sentence like 'John is ready.' Is this material conveyed explicitly or implicitly? Opinions differ. In relevance theory, reference assignment and pragmatic enrichment are said to contribute to explicatures, developments and enrichments of what is linguistically present, but the philosopher Kent Bach calls a similar level 'implicature', since on his account the proposition expressed is 'implicit in' what is said.

Grice's discussion of implicatures implies that he thought in terms of a sharp distinction between the explicit and implicit content of an utterance. Another view (held by relevance theorists among others) is that there is a continuum between explicit and implicit content.

A further question is whether the distinction between *encoded* and *inferred* meaning lines up with the distinction between sentence meaning and speaker meaning. A usual assumption is that sentence meaning is deter-

mined by the meanings of the words and the way that they are put together. Word meaning is the subject matter of lexical semantics; phrase and sentence meaning the subject matter of compositional semantics. Speaker meaning may include this encoded meaning, or it may have a more complicated relationship to it, as with ironic utterances, but in either case, what the speaker meant by her utterance must be inferred, as Grice pointed out in his work on meaning. On this highly influential view, the words spoken are a clue, but *only* a clue, to what it was that the speaker intended to mean by her utterance.

See also: speaker meaning

## Mental representation

In cognitive science and linguistics, a technical term, defined as a structured set of elements in the mind. Modern cognitive science is founded on the idea that cognition can be understood in terms of processing of mental representations. Mental representations can be generated as a result of perception and thought; stored in and recalled from memory; and operated on and transformed by various means including inference and other reasoning processes.

In ordinary language, a representation must be a representation *of* something, but the word 'representation' as a technical term does not require this. Some mental representations may be representations of objects or events but other mental representations are purely internal objects.

Pragmatic theorists who see pragmatics as a branch of cognitive science, including relevance theorists, see interpretation of utterances in terms of the generation and transformation of mental representations of utterances, the ultimate output being a set of mental representations which is the hearer's interpretation of the utterance.

See also: Language of Thought hypothesis

## Message

In information theory and the code model of communication, the message is whatever the transmitter encodes as a signal for transmission to the receiver. If the encoding and decoding are carried out correctly and the signal is not degraded by noise, then the receiver ends up with an exact copy of the original message.



The term 'message' used in this strict sense is incompatible with modern inferential pragmatic theories. However, 'message' is also used more loosely to mean whatever the speaker intends to communicate, or perhaps the most important part of it.

See also: code model, inferential model, signal

## Metalinguistic

An adjective which applies to situations in which language is used to comment on language. The distinction between the language in use, the 'object language', and the language used to describe it, the 'metalinguage', comes from modern formal logic.

Here are some examples of metalinguistic use:

This sentence contains five words.

Receive is spelt 'R-E-C-E-I-V-E'.

What does 'sophomore' mean?

That's not a tuxedo, it's a dinner jacket.

The last of these examples is more specifically an example of metalinguistic negation, a phenomenon which has received a great deal of attention within pragmatics.

Metalinguistic use is also sometimes called 'metalingual', for example in Roman Jakobson's list of the functions of language.

See also: metalinguistic negation

## Metalinguistic negation

The phenomenon of negating or denying the applicability of a previous utterance on the grounds of its linguistic form rather than its content. Consider two different possible replies to the following utterance:

Those mongooses are beautiful!

Those aren't mongooses, they're meercats. (standard negation)

Those aren't mongooses, they're mongeese. (metalinguistic negation)

Here the standard negation is a denial of the proposition expressed by the initial utterance. The metalinguistic negation, on the other hand, is a denial of

one aspect of the form of the initial utterance: the plural form of 'mongoose' chosen by the speaker.

Metalinguistic negation differs from ordinary negation in that it is not a claim that the utterance being negated is false, but that it is inappropriate in some way. Almost any aspect of the linguistic form of an utterance can be negated in this way: morphology (as we have seen), syntactic structure, and phonetic and phonological form, including speech sounds and even stress placement (e.g. 'That's not a MAGazine, it's a magaZINE!')

See also: metalinguistic

## Metaphor

A type of figurative speech. Typically, a metaphor ascribes to an entity a property that it does not, strictly and literally speaking, possess, although not all metaphors fit this definition, for reasons explained below.

Metaphors are not restricted to any particular type of word or phrase. The metaphorical element of a sentence can be a noun phrase, as in (1):

(1) John is an iceberg.

Verbs can also be used metaphorically, as in (2):

(2) Flintoff drilled the ball to the boundary.

Sometimes a complete sentence is used metaphorically, as in Mary's response in (3):

(3) John: How is the banking system these days?

Mary: Big beasts are stumbling and falling all around.

A second kind of distinction can be made between, on the one hand, creative metaphors, that is those that are invented and interpreted on the fly, like the examples above, and, on the other hand, 'dead' metaphors, those which have become lexicalized through repeated use. An attachment for spreading water finely from a hose or a watering can is called a *rose*. Presumably this sense of the word came about originally through creative use based on the resemblance to the flower. Now, however, it is lexicalized as a second sense: the word 'rose' is ambiguous or polysemous. This use of

the word has moved from the domain of pragmatics towards linguistic semantics.

Metaphor plays a role in language change, then, since some creative metaphors become rather conventional through repeated use, and even clichéd, as the use of 'drill' is in (2). Some of these conventionalized metaphors are lexicalized as dead metaphors.

Statements involving dead metaphors are literal rather than figurative. 'Many watering cans are fitted with roses,' is literally true, on one sense of the word 'rose'. The task of interpreting a dead metaphor is effectively disambiguation, that is, picking the correct sense from among those available in the lexicon. Creative metaphor requires a separate explanation.

Metaphor has been studied by those interested in literature and rhetoric since classical times, including Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*. According to one classical account, metaphors function as disguised similes, so in uttering (1) a speaker conveys that John is like an iceberg.

Grice's well-known suggestions about metaphor within the framework of his work on conversation adopted this classical account of what metaphors convey. For Grice, metaphors are blatant violations of his first maxim of truthfulness – *Do not say what you believe to be false* – since what is said in such utterances stands out as strictly and literally false. Thus, on the usual assumption that the speaker is being cooperative, they give rise to an implicature. For example, (1) is false, since John is not literally an iceberg. In uttering (1) a speaker implicates something true, informative and relevant, such as the closely related simile: John is like an iceberg.

Not all metaphors are strictly and literally false, though. There is no doubt that John Donne's 'No man is an island' is metaphorical, but if taken literally it is obviously true, as is any utterance of 'You're no angel' addressed to a human being. The first maxim of quality is not violated in such cases. Such metaphors, and some others are clearer breaches of relevance or informativeness than truthfulness. The response in (3) might be false if taken literally, but could be understood as a metaphor even in a context where it happens also to be literally true, since it is only on a metaphorical interpretation that it would meet expectations raised by the question asked.

At best, Grice's account could only explain how the search for a figurative interpretation is triggered, by blatant violation of a maxim, but not how it is resolved. Lately, attention has focused on how particular interpretations are reached and on providing a deeper understanding of why metaphor is used at all and why it is so common. Classical views characterize what is conveyed

by the use of a metaphor, without explaining why metaphors are used in the first place. One view, suggested by such accounts, is that the use of metaphors is largely ornamental and optional; they provide a more elegant or witty way of expressing a thought. The recent work on what is involved *cognitively* in producing and interpreting metaphors supports a different view: that metaphor arises naturally in communication.

Lakoff and Johnson put metaphor at the centre of thought as well as language. The essential point is that metaphors are generated by mappings between different domains, as in speaking of the history of a company (one domain) as a journey (which is a different domain). These mappings are productive, in that they can be exploited to create a series of related metaphors. A company director unafraid of cliché might say, 'We started out ill-equipped for the road ahead of us, but we have moved rapidly, although we are not yet at our destination.'

Advocates of this domain-mapping approach stress that metaphor is pervasive in ordinary speech and writing as well as in literature. This is taken to indicate that thought as well as language use is characterized by domain mappings. That is, we conceive of (for example) life as a journey, and ethical standards in terms of vertical elevation (someone may be 'highly moral' or 'base'), and this can be seen in our tendency to reason by analogy as well as in creative use of metaphor and in the dead metaphors that litter our lexicon.

Recently, relevance theorists have raised the possibility that metaphor is continuous with hyperbole, loose use and approximation. If communication is inferential, then any word uttered is only a clue to the meaning intended by the speaker, and in principle the meaning conveyed by the use of a word cannot be assumed to be the lexically encoded meaning (if any). Speakers and hearers take only what is necessary from the lexicalized sense of a word and entertain an *ad hoc* concept, that is, one constructed on and for a particular occasion. In metaphor, some central features of the lexicalized concept are typically not used. For example, in uttering (1) as a metaphor, a speaker would not intend her assertion to entail that John is made of frozen water or that he is to be found floating in the sea. Rather, it is coldness and perhaps also more peripheral features such as distance and impassivity that the speaker relies on, and that (in successful communication) the hearer grasps.

A fascinating and obviously pragmatic element of metaphor is *indeterminacy of meaning*. Metaphors can convey open-ended or indeterminate meaning. An utterance of the famous example, 'John is a machine,' might

convey that John is efficient, or that he is relentless and unstoppable, or again that he is somewhat lacking in human charm and character. In many contexts a speaker could use it to convey an indeterminate mixture of such ideas and would be understood as having done so. Grice's view of communication as inferential arguably predicts this kind of indeterminacy. Relevance theory places a good deal of emphasis on indeterminacy in its use of the notions of weak communication and ad hoc concepts.

One profound remaining difficulty in understanding metaphor is that many accounts only push the problem back one step. In using (1) metaphorically, it is true that a speaker is conveying that John is cold, but only in a metaphorical sense of the word 'cold'. A deeper understanding would explain just how emotional 'coldness' relates to low temperature.

See also: implicature, figurative speech, conversational maxims, indeterminacy, poetic effects

## Metarepresentation

A representation of a representation. For example, a picture of Mount Fuji is a representation of that mountain. A picture of that picture would be a representation of the original picture, and a metarepresentation of the mountain. On the assumption that (some) thoughts are mental representations, a thought about Mount Fuji is a representation of the mountain and a thought about that thought is a metarepresentation. For example, the original thought might be: *Mount Fuji is in Japan*. Then the thought *I believe that Mount Fuji is in Japan* is a metarepresentation.

This is relevant to pragmatics in at least two ways. Utterances can also be metarepresentational, as when they report other utterances (direct and indirect speech) and when they report thoughts, for example 'John believes that Mount Fuji is in France.' In addition, embedded thoughts are central to Grice's theory of speaker meaning: the speaker metarepresents the thought she wants to convey, and the hearer metarepresents some of the speaker's intentions.

The concept of metarepresentation is made much use of in relevance theory. All representation in relevance theory is analysed in terms of resemblance. On this account, a metarepresentation is a representation of another representation which it resembles (to some degree).

See also: meaning, mental representation, mindreading

## Metonymy

A figure of speech, metonymy is the use of a property to refer to its possessor, or an object associated with it. For example:

The ham sandwich would like the bill.

Here the phrase 'the ham sandwich' is used to refer to the customer who ordered a ham sandwich.

Conventionalized metonymy is frequently used as a shorthand: for example, 'Downing Street' for the British prime minister and his advisers, 'Westminster' for the members of both houses of parliament, and 'the crown' for the monarch.

Polysemy is often metonymic in character: for example one sense of 'newspaper' is the organization which publishes a newspaper.

In cognitive linguistics, metonymy is seen as a fundamental characteristic of human cognition.

Synecdoche, in which a part of something is used to refer to the whole, is sometimes seen as a variety of metonymy.

See also: synecdoche

## M-implicature

In neo-Gricean pragmatics, any implicature generated by the M-principle is classified as an M-implicature. Since the M-principle is intended by Levinson, its inventor, to correspond to Grice's maxims of manner, M-implicatures are roughly those that are generated in Gricean pragmatics by the manner maxims (except that the effects of the fourth sub-maxim, 'Be orderly', are mostly explained instead by the I-principle). More generally, if a way of saying things that is not the lowest-effort way is chosen, then there will be an M-implicature that the situation is also atypical.

Paraphrase is seen as giving rise to M-implicatures. For example utterances of 'Bart caused the book to be written' implicate that Bart brought the book into being by some non-stereotypical means, that is by some means other than writing it himself: perhaps he commissioned it, or wrote a computer program that generated it.

Another phenomenon explained in terms of M-implicature is the resistance of more marked referring expressions to co-referential interpretations. Compare these examples:

John came in and the man laughed. (Here 'the man' is interpreted as non-co-referential with 'John')

John came in and he laughed. (Here 'he' is usually interpreted as co-referential with John).

Use of a definite description instead of a pronoun M-implicates that the use of pronoun would not have been suitable, and thus the definite description is interpreted as referring to a different individual.

See also: M-principle

## Mindreading (Theory of Mind)

In psychology, the ability to infer mental states of others, such as their beliefs and desires, from their behaviour. For example, if you see someone manipulating the catch on the window in your office you might think that he wants to open it, and you might assume that this is because he thinks it too warm in the office. The terms 'Theory of Mind' and 'mindreading' are both used for this ability.

Interpretation of utterances can be seen as a special case of this ability, if it is assumed that hearers must infer the speaker's communicative intentions from her utterances, as it is in Gricean accounts of communication.

In experimental work it has been found that participants who fail the standard test for mindreading ability, the *Sally-Anne* or *false belief* task, also have difficulty with certain pragmatic phenomena such as irony and scalar implicatures.

However the picture is rather complicated. Normal children younger than about 4 years old fail the Sally-Anne task but have some pragmatic abilities, and in any case are not entirely devoid of theory of mind.

There has also been investigation of pragmatic and mindreading deficits caused by autism; and of whether other species including chimpanzees and dogs have mindreading ability.

## M-intention

In Grice's work on speaker meaning, an M-intention is a speaker's intention to mean something by an utterance.

Grice's definition of speaker meaning is as follows:

When a speaker *S* means *r* (the audience's response) by an utterance of *x*, the speaker utters *x* intending:

- (i) to produce a certain response *r* in the audience, *A*.
- (ii) *A* to recognize that *S* intends *A* to produce *r*.
- (iii) *A* to recognize that *S* intends the fulfilment of (i) to be based on the fulfilment of (ii).

For convenience, he abbreviated this to: *S* utters *x* *M*-intending that *A* produce *r*.

See also: speaker meaning

## Misfire

In Austin's work on speech acts, a misfire is one of the two ways in which a speech act can be unsuccessful. According to speech-act theory, there are felicity conditions on speech acts. If certain of these conditions are not met, then no speech act is performed. The relevant conditions are that (1) There is a conventional procedure with a conventional effect and the participants and situation are appropriate, according to that procedure; and (2) The procedure is carried out correctly and completely.

Consider the naming of a ship. A passer-by with a bottle of champagne cannot on a whim succeed in naming the ship. Equally, if the designated namer accidentally carries out the ceremony on a ship in the wrong boatyard, then she will not have succeeded in naming either the intended ship or the one she stumbled on. If she is at the right ship, but is interrupted before she can speak the necessary words, again the ship will not have been named.

See also: abuse, felicity conditions, speech acts

## Modified Occam's Razor

The principle that senses are not to be multiplied beyond necessity: in other words, do not explain differences in speaker meaning as due to linguistic ambiguity unless forced to do so. The phrase was coined by Grice, who motivated his introduction of implicatures as a technical device by the claim that they could keep linguistic semantics simple. Divergence in meaning or use of



expressions need not lead us to postulate that the words used themselves have more than one sense.

This is a modified version of Occam's razor, a principle of economy in theorizing, especially in science: entities are not to be multiplied beyond necessity. The idea is that an explanation of a phenomenon which postulates fewer basic entities is better than one which postulates more, all other things being equal. This principle is attributed to the fourteenth century English philosopher William of Ockham (sometimes spelled 'Occam').

## Modularity

The hypothesis that the human mind possesses some specialized units dedicated to particular tasks or functions. The idea is that the mind is to some extent 'compartmentalized' into units that each do their own thing. Each unit acts only on certain kinds of input: for example the visual processing module acts only on visual stimuli.

Many linguists see language competence as a reflection of a modular, domain-specific faculty of language. Pragmatic abilities might be due to another module, or to general intelligence applied to language use. The latter view is held by the philosopher Fodor, and perhaps by Chomsky. It was also the view taken by early relevance theory, although relevance theorists now favour the view that there is a dedicated pragmatics module. Cognitive linguists reject the notion of modularity entirely, while many pragmatic theorists do not take any stance on the issue.

See also: massive modularity

## M-principle

In neo-Gricean pragmatics, the M-principle or Manner-principle is one of a small number of heuristics governing communicative behaviour. The M-principle is intended to cover the territory covered by Grice's manner maxims, particularly the supermaxim ('Be perspicuous') and the first and third sub-maxims of manner: 'Avoid obscurity of expression' and 'Be brief.' Levinson's M-principle and Q-principle taken together cover roughly the cases covered by Horn's Q-principle.

A brief formulation of the M-principle in terms of instructions to speaker and hearer is as follows:

Speaker: Do not say things in an abnormal way without reason.

Addressee: What is said in an abnormal way indicates an abnormal situation.

The M-principle is one side of the division of pragmatic labour. When unmarked expressions are used, a stereotypical interpretation is generated, according to the I-principle. However if a marked expression is used, then according to the M-principle there should have been a reason, and the hearer is entitled to assume that a non-stereotypical interpretation was intended.

See also: I-principle, M-implicature, Q-principle

## Mutual knowledge

Mutual or common knowledge of any proposition,  $p$ , between two people,  $A$  and  $B$ , is defined this way:

$A$  knows  $p$

$B$  knows  $p$

$A$  knows that  $B$  knows  $p$

$B$  knows that  $A$  knows  $p$

$A$  knows that  $B$  knows that  $A$  knows  $p$

$B$  knows that  $A$  knows that  $B$  knows  $p$

and so on, *ad infinitum*.

The role of mutual knowledge in communication is raised by Grice's definition of speaker meaning, since there are examples that show that speaker and hearer cannot be sure of coordinating on the same interpretation unless they share mutual knowledge of all relevant facts.

The definition of mutual knowledge contains an infinite regress, and this worries theorists. Several solutions to the problem have been proposed: that this infinite regress is not harmful; that mutual knowledge is not a prerequisite for communication, but a possible outcome; that a weaker notion, such as *mutual manifestness*, is what is required.

See also: manifestness

## Naive optimism

In relevance theory, the first level of pragmatic development. A naive optimist is someone whose interpretation of utterances proceeds as though he did not know that speakers are not always benevolent – they sometimes lie – and that speakers are not always competent – they do not express themselves as clearly or succinctly as they might.

Given an utterance, a naive optimist simply looks for an interpretation that makes the utterance relevant to him, and accepts it without considering whether the speaker could have intended that interpretation. The suggestion is that very young children might be naive optimists in this sense.

See also: cautious optimism, relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure, sophisticated understanding

## Narrowing

This is a term used in lexical pragmatics for one type of pragmatic effect on the meaning contributed by a word to the proposition expressed. Some words can be seen as having extensions: the noun 'panda' denotes (i.e. has as its extension) all and only pandas (i.e. the set of pandas), and a statement such as '*An An* is a panda' is true if and only if *An An* is a member of that set.

Narrowing is the term used for cases where the extension of the word as it is used in an utterance is less than the extension of the lexically encoded sense of the word. Consider an utterance of 'John drinks' used to express the proposition that John drinks alcohol. Events of drinking alcohol are a proper subset of drinking events, so this is narrowing. In this case, the narrowed meaning of the word 'drink' has become lexicalized. In other cases the narrowed meaning is purely occasion-specific, as with 'John cut the cake' to mean that John cut it with a knife.

Some metaphors may also be cases of narrowing, for example the use of 'John's a man' to express the idea that he is a man with certain qualities: for example bravery and determination.

The converse of narrowing is broadening, and both are species of lexical modulation.

See also: ad hoc concept, lexical modulation, lexical pragmatics

## Natural and nonnatural meaning

Grice distinguished between natural meaning, which he sometimes abbreviated to meaning<sub>N</sub>, and nonnatural meaning, which can be abbreviated to meaning<sub>NN</sub>. The English words 'mean' and 'meaning' are used in various ways. Grice's claim is that most or all of these uses should be seen as relating to one of two senses of 'meaning', the natural and the nonnatural.

'Mean' has its 'natural' sense in examples such as:

Those spots meant measles.

The recent budget means that we shall have a hard year.

The 'nonnatural' sense is exemplified by such examples as:

Those three rings on the bell mean that the bus is full.

That remark, 'Smith couldn't get on without his trouble and strife' meant that Smith found his wife indispensable.

Grice notes that one cannot felicitously say, 'Those spots mean measles, but he hasn't got measles' or 'The recent budget means that we shall have a hard year, but we shan't have.' In cases of natural meaning, *x means that p* entails *p*. There is no such entailment for nonnatural meaning. It is perfectly consistent to say, for example, 'Those three rings on the bell mean that the bus is full, but actually the bus isn't full; the conductor was mistaken.'

Another diagnostic is that in nonnatural cases, but not in natural cases, it is possible to complete the sentence after mean with something in quotation marks: for example:

?? Those spots meant 'measles'.

?? The recent budget means 'We shall have a hard year.'

Those three rings on the bell mean 'The bus is full.'

That remark, 'Smith couldn't get on without his trouble and strife' meant 'Smith found his wife indispensable.'

Crucially, from the point of view of pragmatics, nonnatural meaning can usually be attributed to a person. This is impossible with natural meaning. It is very odd indeed to say 'Someone meant by those spots that Smith had measles.' But it is fine to say 'The conductor meant by (his making) those three

rings on the bell that the bus was full.' So nonnatural meaning appears to be the kind of meaning that a speaker conveys in making an utterance, and the purpose of making the natural/nonnatural distinction is to make it clear what a theory of speaker meaning is trying to describe. Thus Grice's theory of meaning focuses on what speakers nonnaturally mean by their utterances.

The distinction between natural and nonnatural meaning is somewhat similar to the distinction between natural and conventional signs made by the philosopher Charles Pierce. However Grice's distinction allows for the fact that some things that can mean nonnaturally are not signs and some are not even conventional. For example, a gesture with no conventional meaning can be used to mean nonnaturally, if the intended recipient can work out what its producer meant by it on that occasion. In addition, Grice points out that "some things that have natural meaning are not signs of what they mean." The recent budget means<sub>N</sub> that we will have a hard year, but a budget is not a natural sign of a hard year in the way that smoke is a natural sign of fire.

See also: meaning

## Neo-Gricean pragmatics

A group of pragmatic theories based on work by Larry Horn, Stephen Levinson and Jay Atlas. Neo-Gricean theories develop Grice's inferential account of communication while reducing his maxims to a smaller number of principles or heuristics (two for Horn; three for Levinson). The idea is that the regularities attributed to the maxims can be explained in terms of these basic principles: for example, a principle that the useful information in what is said should be maximized (the Q-principle); and an opposed but complementary principle that what the speaker says should be minimized (the R-principle).

Implicatures are seen as arising from the interplay between these principles, which inherently pull in different directions. They are categorized according to which principle dominates. For example, scalar implicatures, first discussed in detail by Horn, are categorized as Q-implicatures. A speaker utters a sentence of the form 'Some Xs are Y' and, since 'All Xs are Y' would have been more informative, and, given the Q-principle, she should have been more informative if possible, she implicates that not all Xs are Y.

A good deal of work in neo-Gricean pragmatics has focused on items such as scalar implicatures that are seen as default inferences.

See also: Q-principle, R-principle

## Non-detachability

A property of some conversational implicatures, noted by Grice in his introduction of the term 'implicature'. The idea is that an implicature is communicated by saying a certain thing in a particular context, and it does not matter precisely how it is said. As long as the same proposition is expressed, the same implicature should be generated. The implicature cannot be 'detached' simply by using a different form of words. For example, a speaker might respond to an offer of a glass of wine by saying, 'I find wine soporific,' thus implicating that she does not want the wine. If she instead said 'Wine tends to make me sleepy,' the same implicature would result.

Some implicatures are highly non-detachable, in particular, implicatures where what is *not* said is what matters. For example saying in a letter of reference only that Smith is always well-dressed will implicate that he is a bad philosopher, just as much as only saying that his spelling is admirable.

Non-detachability is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for implicature. Implicatures generated by violation of a manner maxim are detachable: in such cases the implicature arises from the way in which what is said is put, so changing the words used can mean that the implicature does not arise.

See also: calculability, cancellability

## Non-truth-conditional meaning

What is communicated by an utterance can be divided into truth-conditional and non-truth-conditional parts. There are really two distinctions here. One is between the proposition expressed by the utterance and its conversational implicatures. By definition, conversational implicatures do not affect the truth-conditions of the utterance (although implicatures have their own truth-conditions).

The other distinction is between two different kinds of meaning that words can contribute to utterances. For example, the contribution that 'but' makes to the truth-conditions of an utterance is apparently identical to that made by 'and': '*P* but *Q*' seems to be true in just the same cases in which '*P* and *Q*' is true (where *P* and *Q* are any two sentences). Nonetheless 'but' and 'and' have different meanings: 'but' has the same truth-conditional meaning as 'and'; in

addition it encodes non-truth-conditional meaning. The difference is (roughly) that an idea of contrast is carried by 'but', as these examples show:

He is a linguist but he is smart.

He is a linguist and he is smart.

Non-truth-conditional meaning contributed by lexical items can be treated as encoding conceptual representations such as 'P contrasts with Q', as in Grice's account in terms of conventional implicatures.

An alternative treatment is as procedural constraints on the derivation of implicatures and the proposition expressed. For example, 'but' might encode an instruction to process the clause following it so as to contradict an assumption already held (e.g. an assumption that has been implied by the preceding clause).

See also: conventional implicature, implicature, procedural meaning, truth-conditions

## **Opting-out**

In Grice's theory of conversation, a participant in a conversation can opt out of the Cooperative Principle by indicating that she will say no more. For example, a politician answering a question with 'No comment' is indicating that she is not going to cooperate with the questioner, at least on that particular topic. Since the Cooperative principle is no longer in force, conversational maxims also cannot be assumed to be in force. The politician in the example is giving notice that she will not be informative on the topic in question; also, if talk comes round to that topic one should not expect her to speak about it relevantly.

Since opting-out suspends the Cooperative Principle, and conversational implicatures are generated only on the assumption that the Cooperative Principle is in force, opting-out stops the generation of conversational implicatures. It is not clear, therefore, that Grice's theory can explain implicatures that are conveyed by meaningful silences, refusals to speak and so on.

See also: Cooperative Principle

## **Ostensive act**

Speaking literally, an ostensive act is an act of showing, or of pointing something out. In relevance theory, the term 'ostensive' is used to distinguish overtly communicative acts from other actions. The definition is that an ostensive act is one that is manifestly aimed at making an assumption manifest. That is, an ostensive act is one made with an intention to convey information (the informative intention) and with the intention that it is evident that the act was an attempt to convey that information (the communicative intention).

See also: communicative intention

## **Ostensive-inferential model**

A characterization of the relevance-theoretic model of communication. It is ostensive in that it treats utterances as instances of showing. It is inferential in that it treats utterances as attempts by speakers to communicate by providing a certain kind of clue to hearers.



The idea is that, in producing an utterance, the producer of the utterance is openly trying to direct the audience's attention. In technical terms, ostensive behaviour makes manifest an intention to make something manifest.

See also: abductive inference, manifestness

## Parenthetical

Elements that are part of a sentence, but are semantically or pragmatically separate and also somewhat distinct syntactically. The label 'parenthetical' comes from the philosopher J. O. Urmson, who pointed out that there is a group of verbs that can be used in this way. For example, there is a contrast between the first example, where 'deduce' is not parenthetical, and the second, third and fourth examples below, where it is:

I deduce that the photograph is behind a sliding panel.

I deduce the photograph is behind a sliding panel.

The photograph, I deduce, is behind a sliding panel.

The photograph is behind a sliding panel, I deduce.

There is syntactic evidence for parentheticals in cases where the main clause is imperative or interrogative. Examples of the first type behave differently from the others.

I wonder whether it will be possible to get it out.

I wonder, will it be possible to get it out?

Will it be possible, I wonder, to get it out?

Will it be possible to get it out, I wonder?

The parenthetical cases are usually said to express two speech acts. The speech act expressed by the parenthetical element tells the hearer how to take the speech act expressed by the main clause. Some sentence adverbials, such as 'frankly' and 'unfortunately', have been said to behave similarly.

## Parody

A term borrowed from literary criticism and theory of art where 'parody' means an exaggerated imitation of the style of a certain artist/writer/musician

or school of art etc. Parody is also a figure of speech: an exaggerated imitation or distorted copy of an utterance.

For example, Bill has taken Ann's doll and is mistreating it. Bill's response to Ann is a parody of her utterance:

Ann: Please give it back.

Bill: [With exaggerated, whining intonation] Please give it back she says. Pleeeeease. Pretty please. Boo-hoo . . .

It has been suggested that parody is a mocking imitation in which the target of the mockery is of the *form* of the original utterance, in contrast to irony which (according to relevance theory) involves a dissociative attitude towards the *content* of an utterance or thought.

## **Performative**

A performative is an utterance that does something other than describing a state of affairs. The idea is that some utterances change the world rather than describing it. For example, in saying 'I promise to be there' the speaker is not describing a promise but making it. Equally, when the foreman of a jury says 'Guilty' or 'We find the defendant guilty' or the judge says 'I sentence you to life imprisonment' they are creating facts, rather than stating them.

Performatives do not seem to be true or false, as the oddness of this dialogue suggests:

I now pronounce you man and wife.

?? That's not true.

Instead of truth conditions, performatives have felicity conditions. For example, the speaker in the example above has to have the power to officiate at marriages, the participants must not already be married and so on. If these conditions are not met the act will misfire.

Performatives stand opposed to constatives, which are utterances that just describe states of affairs. This distinction was introduced and then undermined by Austin as a demonstration that all utterances, including assertions, are performatives.

See also: constative, explicit performative, misfire, primary performative, speech acts

## Perlocutionary act

In speech-act theory, a perlocutionary act is the act of bringing about effects on the addressee by means of the utterance. It is distinguished from the locutionary and illocutionary acts.

Consider a negotiation with a hostage-taker under siege. The police negotiator says: 'If you release the children, we'll allow the press to publish your demands.' In making that utterance she has offered a deal (illocutionary act). Suppose the hostage-taker accepts the deal and as a consequence releases the children. In that case we can say that by making the utterance, the negotiator brought about the release of the children, or in more technical terms, that this was a perlocutionary effect of the utterance.

In practice, it is not always easy to distinguish between the perlocutionary and illocutionary effects of particular utterances. The perlocutionary effects should not be thought to include uptake: that is, understanding of the intended meaning and illocutionary force of the utterance, although uptake is indeed an effect on the addressee, brought about by the utterance. Perlocutionary effects begin where uptake leaves off. Given that the addressee understands (for example) that he has been offered a deal, what effect does that have on him?

See also: illocutionary act, locutionary act, speech acts

## Phatic act

In speech-act theory, the act of making an utterance in a language; the act of uttering certain words and phrases. A phatic act is one component of the basic-level speech act, a locutionary act. A locutionary act also typically comprises a phonic and a rhetic act.

For example, if a speaker says 'He is at the bank' then in performing the locutionary act of making this utterance, she has uttered certain words in English, making up a particular sentence. This is the phatic act.

Note that this sense of 'phatic' should not be confused with *phatic communication*.

See also: illocutionary act, locutionary act, perlocutionary act, phonic act, rhetic act, speech acts

## Phatic communication

Many utterances appear to be aimed more at tending social relationships and opening and maintaining conversations than at giving or requesting information. The technical term used in pragmatics for 'small talk' of this type is *phatic communication*, or sometimes *phatic communion*.

Many phatic utterances are of fixed phrases:

Good morning!

Hello!

How do you do?

Full sentences are also used, particularly questions on uncontroversial topics:

How are you?

Nice weather, isn't it?

As examples like these show, the goal of smoothing things over is often accomplished under the guise of feigned interest in some other topic. Entire conversations along these lines can be mainly phatic.

See also: functions of language

## Phonic act

In speech-act theory, the act of making speech sounds. A phonic act is one component of the basic-level speech act, a locutionary act. A locutionary act also typically comprises a phatic and a rhetic act.

For example, if a speaker says 'He is at the bank' then in performing the locutionary act of making this utterance, she has uttered certain speech sounds, beginning with an voiceless fricative, followed by a close front vowel (/hi:/) and so on, with a certain pattern of intonation and stress. This is the phonic act.

See also: illocutionary act, locutionary act, perlocutionary act, phatic act, rhetic act, speech acts

## Plug

In work on presuppositions, a plug is a linguistic item that blocks presuppositions. For example, utterances of 'It was John who ate all the cake' are said to presuppose that someone ate the cake, and that there was cake. Embedding this sentence under the verb 'say' gives:

Mary said that it was John who ate all the cake.

Utterances of this sentence do not presuppose that someone ate the cake, nor that there was cake.

Verbs of saying such as *remarked*, *opined*, *commented* as well as *said* are regarded as plugs, as are propositional attitude verbs such as *hope*, *doubt* and *believe*. However factive verbs of saying (e.g. *point out*) and factive propositional attitude verbs (e.g. *know*) are exceptions.

See also: filter, hole

## Poetic effect

In relevance theory, the term *poetic effect* or *poetic effects* refers to effects of a type that are typically aimed at by literary texts, particularly poetry, but which also occur in ordinary speech. Sperber and Wilson define 'poetic effect' as 'the peculiar effect of an utterance that achieves most of its relevance through an array of weak implicatures'.

The aim is to capture the substance of observations such as Robert Frost's 'Poetry is what gets lost in translation,' and the traditional point that good style is resistant to paraphrase.

When an utterance gives rise to an indeterminate array of weak implicatures, and perhaps even weak explicatures, successful interpretation is not a matter of grasping one particular proposition or implication, but of being guided into a certain region of thoughts. In technical terms, the utterance raises the *manifestness* of a number of assumptions.

See also: indeterminacy, weak communication, weak implicature

## Politeness

The desire to be polite, or not to be rude, can obviously have a profound effect on what a speaker says. Accordingly, the topic of politeness has received

a great deal of attention in pragmatics. However, politeness is not exclusively, and perhaps not even mainly a linguistic or pragmatic phenomenon. Holding a door open for someone and using a knife and fork (in the correct hands and in the right way) are both examples of politeness that have nothing much to do with language use. So work on politeness in pragmatics is the study of the effect on language use of certain principles from another domain: the domain of socially appropriate behaviour.

Defining politeness is hard. Ordinary dictionary definitions claim that politeness is a matter of respectful and considerate behaviour towards others, but this is vague and may confuse politeness with kindness. What is polite is not necessarily kind, and in certain circumstances it may be kinder to be impolite: to tell someone that he is about to make a fool of himself, for example, rather than to hold one's tongue and let him do it. In scholarly work there are definitions along the following lines: politeness of one person, *A*, towards another, *B*, is an attempt to meet some of *B*'s expectations about the relationship between *A* and *B*. Or again: politeness describes the extent to which *A*'s actions conform to *B*'s perceptions of how they should be performed. This kind of definition avoids the trap of equating politeness with consideration, but still leaves open important questions. What are the relevant expectations about the relationship and about how actions are performed? Social convention is part of the answer, but not the whole of it. *B* might expect *A* to wear his wedding ring on the ring finger of his left hand, and that is the convention in some societies, but it would not usually be thought impolite for him to wear it on a different finger.

Putting aside these worries about the concept of politeness in general, it is clear that there are a number of ways in which politeness impacts on speech acts, including the degree to which requests, criticisms and some other speech acts are made indirectly, and the use of honorifics and other socially deictic terms and of euphemisms. Indirectness can be a way of softening the abruptness of a request, and is implemented in different ways in different languages, depending partly on the resources of the language and partly as a matter of convention. In English, great use is made of different modals. 'Lend me your car' is very direct and would usually have the force of an order. 'Can I borrow your car?' is less direct, and is more likely to be a request, but it is more direct than 'Could I borrow your car?', which itself is more direct than 'I wonder if I could borrow your car.' The longer, less direct forms in this list involve more effort for the speaker to produce and probably also for the hearer to process, with no change in the content of the request, which in all

cases is simply that the hearer lend his car to the speaker. Why do speakers go to such extra trouble and put their hearer to extra effort? Obviously there is some imperative at work beyond clear, efficient communication, and we may assume that it is politeness. Note that politeness does not require that the most indirect way of speaking is used, but that the one that is suitable to the circumstances is chosen, where the circumstances may involve the social setting (from e.g. courtroom to barroom), the relative social positions of the speaker and addressee and their absolute social positions, and their social 'closeness' (roughly, a scale from family and friends, through acquaintances to strangers). It would be weirdly inappropriate and even impolite to say (except as a joke) to a close friend, of a similar social standing, in an informal setting, 'I wonder if there is any way that it would be possible for you to arrange to pass me the salt.'

Social deixis, the use of expressions which are sensitive to the social context of the utterance, is closely connected with politeness. The resources possessed for marking social distinctions in speech vary from language to language and from culture to culture. In some East Asian languages (including Chinese languages, Japanese and Korean), there is extensive use of honorific terms. Some of these uses mark a general level of formality (e.g. the use or omission of honorifics with items such as *bath* and *money* in Japanese) but others clearly mark politeness since there are honorific terms that cannot be used by the speaker referring to herself or things connected with her, but can and often should be used when referring to the hearer or things connected to him. For example in Japanese one can address one's mother as 'o-kā-san', where 'o' and 'san' are both honorifics, but in speaking to another about one's own mother one generally has to use a non-honorific word such as 'haha' (except in rather informal speech). Thus, for purely pragmatic reasons, unless one is addressing one's own mother, the honorific form is mostly constrained to referring to the addressee's or a third party's mother. The study of politeness in language use aims to explain such facts.

Politeness is concerned with what an agent should (in some sense) do and what he should not do. It is tempting to suppose that there are principles which describe what behaviour is to be aimed for and what avoided and that these principles have a causal role in bringing about good behaviour. This would amount to postulating a maxim or maxims of politeness. Indeed Grice, who proposed that talk exchanges were governed by maxims

of conversation, mentioned that he thought there were also maxims of politeness and other social and moral principles, which would give rise to non-conversational implicatures. The linguist Geoffrey Leech proposed that politeness in speech is governed by a politeness principle and six maxims of politeness along the lines of Grice's Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims. The six maxims enjoin tact, generosity, approbation (praise), modesty, agreement and sympathy, respectively. More recently Leech has suggested that there is a Grand Strategy of Politeness with a minor and a major constraint: to be polite, communicate meanings which (major constraint) place a high value on what relates to the other person, typically but not necessarily the addressee, and which (minor constraint) place a low value on what relates to the speaker. The major constraint is of more importance than the minor constraint and outweighs it when they suggest conflicting utterances.

Another theory of politeness in language use is Fraser's 'conversational contract' model, again with an antecedent in Grice's work. Grice says that he entertained the idea that speakers obey the CP and maxims on the basis that entering a conversation amounts to accepting certain obligations in a quasi-contractual manner. A certain level of politeness might be one such obligation.

The most influential approach to politeness in pragmatics is Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson's politeness theory. They postulate that politeness in language use is governed by the need to preserve 'face', a term and concept they adopt from the sociologist Erving Goffman. Face is defined as the image that a person has as a member of society. Brown and Levinson divide it into negative and positive aspects. *Negative face* is related to the desire to be free to pursue one's goals; *positive face* to the desire to be liked. They postulate that attempts at politeness can be understood as attempts to avoid damaging someone's face when the situation requires the speaker to perform a 'Face-Threatening Act' (FTA) such as making a complaint or a request. Face-threatening acts can threaten positive face or negative face or both. In addition to acts that threaten the addressee's face there are acts that threaten the speaker's face, including thanking, confessing and, more subtly, accepting a compliment. Speakers aim to preserve the positive and negative face of themselves and their addressee.

Politeness is also divided into positive and negative aspects. Positive politeness is the expression of solidarity; negative politeness is the expression of



restraint. A further claim is that there are various politeness strategies that can be used to avoid damaging face.

The account is intended to be cross-linguistic and cross-cultural. Face and the need to have one's face respected are claimed to be universal, as is the division of face into negative and positive aspects. The politeness strategies vary to some extent across cultures, but there are comparable strategies which are triggered differently in different cultures.

Brown and Levinson say that there are three types of strategy when one needs to perform a face-threatening act:

1. do the act 'on the record'
  - (a) baldly, without redress
  - (b) with positive politeness redress
  - (c) with negative politeness redress
2. do the act 'off the record'
3. don't do the act at all

For example, a request to borrow the addressee's car is potentially damaging to his negative face. Performing the act baldly without redress (strategy 1a) might involve simply saying 'Lend me your car.' Strategy (1b) might involve expressing closeness to the addressee by 'chummy' language: 'Oi mate! Lend us your wheels.' Strategy (1c) could involve indirectness and minimizing the imposition: 'I wonder if I could borrow your car, just for twenty minutes?' Strategy (2) would be to imply or implicate, but not say, that the speaker would like to borrow the car: 'I've got to do the shopping and our car is at the garage.' Strategy (3) speaks for itself.

These strategies are listed above in order from least mitigating of potential loss of face to most mitigating. The claim is that the more face-threatening the act, the further down the list a speaker will tend to go.

Brown and Levinson criticize Leech's politeness maxims on the grounds that there are so many that they serve only to catalogue and describe the phenomena rather than explaining them. This criticism might be a little unfair, since Brown and Levinson also propose many politeness strategies: 15 ways of being positively polite and ten ways of being negatively polite. The theoretical point is sound, though. It is obviously *ad hoc* to postulate a new maxim or strategy every time a new variety of behaviour is found that is not predicted by the previous maxims/strategies.

Brown and Levinson make a second criticism of politeness maxims: if they exist it should be possible to exploit them in the way that the conversational maxims can be exploited in Grice's theory of conversation. Blatantly violating one of the conversational maxims seems uncooperative but it can be assumed that the speaker is still obeying the Cooperative Principle at some level and that the violation is intended to convey something different from what was said. Thus by seeming to say something that is obviously false, for example, a speaker can convey something which is, at some level, true, as in ironic or metaphorical utterances. On a maxim-based account of politeness, then, it should be possible to say something that is deliberately and blatantly rude and in so doing implicate something that is polite. Examples are hard to imagine, although it might be possible to treat some of Brown and Levinson's examples of positive politeness this way, such as the use of informal language as in the example above, intuitively felt by many to be *impolite* at some level. The clearest kind of example might be addressing a friend with conventionally insulting words such as swearwords and slurs with the aim of showing social closeness.

Brown and Levinson's own theory has been challenged on the grounds that it does not reflect the way politeness is manifested in all cultures. In particular there has been criticism from East Asian scholars that face, as Brown and Levinson define it, is too individualistic to account for East Asian politeness behaviour, and that deferential language, as manifested in negative politeness strategies, does not necessarily come from a need to avoid imposition, but in some cases is simply a marker of accepted social hierarchy.

Whatever the correct theory of politeness in language use, there is a further question of the scope of the theory. What role does politeness play in language use? Is it ubiquitous, or a fringe phenomenon? As noted above, it is partly determined by society who has to be polite to whom and when. According to Brown and Levinson, there is no 'basic modicum of politeness owed by each to all'. Certainly the powerful and the antisocial often *behave* as though they did not owe politeness to others.

Politeness theorists give the impression of thinking that politeness is always at issue with each utterance and that it has a profound effect on communication. For example, Brown and Levinson claim that 'a great deal of the mismatch between what is "said" and what is 'implicated' can be attributed to politeness'. A contrasting view is that politeness is mainly at issue in what has been called 'interactional discourse', that is, talk which is aimed at estab-

lishing and maintaining social relationships, and it is much less of a factor in 'transactional discourse', that is, talk aimed at getting things done. A different question is whether politeness is communicated. Is a speaker who is being polite necessarily, or even usually expressing politeness as part of her speaker meaning? One view is that in being polite a speaker is mainly trying to *avoid* any implicatures to do with the speaker-hearer's relationship, by staying within certain parameters of socially acceptable behaviour.

## Polysemy

When a word has more than one related sense it is said to be polysemous. The difference between polysemy and lexical ambiguity is that in ambiguity the different senses are unrelated. Lexical ambiguity may be described as several words that happen to be pronounced the same way; polysemy is one word with more than one sense. However, some linguists define the term 'ambiguity' so that it covers polysemy too.

For example, the basic meaning of the word 'neck' is the part of the body joining the head to the torso, but it has another, related sense, as in the phrase 'the neck of a bottle'. By comparison, 'bat' (the flying animal) and 'bat' (the sporting implement) is a case of lexical ambiguity.

One version of the criterion for polysemy is whether two senses are related historically. Another version is cognitive and synchronic: is there one entry or two in the mental lexicon?

Polysemous senses are often in a metaphorical relation to the basic meaning of the word, as with 'neck', above. Another common relation is metonymy, as with the different senses of the newspaper in these examples:

John unwrapped the newspaper from the fish and chips.

This newspaper is in Norwegian.

The newspaper fired its top columnist.

See also: ambiguity, lexical ambiguity

## Pragmatic halo

In normal use, a statement such as 'It's three o'clock' is good enough if the time is close enough to 3 p.m. What is acceptable depends on the hearer's expectations and various other contextual factors. In most circumstances, for

example, an utterance of 'It's three o'clock' will be acceptable at fifteen seconds past three.

The pragmatic halo of an object, or of a linguistic expression that refers to the object, is a set of alternatives 'around' that object that are close enough in context. (The term 'pragmatic halo' was coined by the linguist Peter Lasnik.) For example, the pragmatic halo of the expression 'three o'clock' is a set of times clustered around three o'clock. For other examples, such as the halo of 'townsfolk' in the utterance 'The townsfolk are asleep,' the pragmatic halo may be a set of sets: the lexical denotation of 'townsfolk' is itself a set, so the halo is the set of sets of people that are similar enough (in context) to the set lexically denoted by 'townsfolk'.

The extent and the shape of pragmatic halos depends very sensitively on context. For example, in some cases, uttering 'It's three o'clock' will be alright if it is one minute to, but not if it is one minute past. Equally, the sets in the halo of 'townsfolk' will only include those in which the contextually relevant townsfolk are asleep: this might be a matter of proportion (e.g. 90 per cent) or role (e.g. all the guards).

See also: loose use

## Pragmatic intrusion

When the proposition expressed by an utterance has constituents that do not correspond to constituents of the sentence uttered ('unarticulated constituents'), this is described as pragmatic intrusion. For example, an utterance of 'John is ready' might express the proposition that John is ready *to fly to London*, and an utterance of 'You are not going to die' might express the proposition that Mary is not going to die *from the tiny cut she has received*.

It is a matter of current debate whether it is possible or desirable to account for all pragmatic intrusion in terms of saturation of overt and hidden variables in the linguistic structure and disambiguation. The claim that it is has been called 'indexicalism'. Other theorists claim that at least some pragmatic intrusion is due to purely pragmatic enrichment.

See also: free enrichment, saturation, unarticulated constituent

## Preparatory conditions

In speech-act theory the preparatory conditions are prerequisites for a speech act to occur, in the sense that if they are not satisfied the speech act will not be

of the type in question, or it will be at best defective. The term 'preparatory conditions' was coined by John Searle in his influential work on systematizing the study of speech acts. For example, the preparatory conditions he suggests for the speech act of promising to do something, *A*, are (1) that the hearer would prefer the speaker to do *A* than not to do *A*, (2) that the speaker believes that the hearer would prefer her to do *A* than not to do *A*, and (3) it is not obvious to the hearer that the speaker would do *A* in the normal course of events.

See also: essential conditions, felicity conditions, sincerity condition

## Presumption of optimal relevance

A central claim of relevance theory is that each ostensive stimulus (including every utterance) raises a presumption that it will be optimally relevant to the addressee. This claim is called the Communicative (or Second) Principle of Relevance. The presumption of optimal relevance is defeasible: on a given occasion it may not hold. The claim is that the hearer is (rationally) justified in proceeding as though it holds. The presumption is defined as follows:

*The utterance is presumed to be (1) at least relevant enough to be worth the speaker's attention and (2) the most relevant one that is compatible with the speaker's abilities and preferences.*

The first part of the presumption sets a minimum expected relevance for any utterance, namely that it will be worth attending to and processing. The claim here is that the minimum return in cognitive effects from the utterance is that they will just offset the processing effort involved in arriving at them.

The second part sets a maximum expected relevance for any utterance: that it should be more relevant to the addressee than any other utterance the speaker could produce and is willing to produce at that time.

See also: Communicative Principle of Relevance

## Presupposition

This is a technical term in philosophy of language and pragmatics for an extra level of meaning in addition to the proposition expressed by an utterance and its implicatures. Use of the notion of presupposition is intended to explicate the pre-theoretical intuition that certain sentences or utterances take something for granted. Here is a well-known example:

The king of France is bald.

In the terminology of presupposition, this has been argued to presuppose that there is a king of France, and, assuming that the presupposition is satisfied, assert that he is bald. In general, definite descriptions (here 'The king of France') are said to give rise to a presupposition of the existence of the individual described. In the now-standard terminology, linguistic items or constructions that give rise to presuppositions are called *presupposition triggers*.

The following are often associated with presupposition: factive verbs, such as 'know', and 'discover', clefting and pseudo-clefting constructions, and wh-questions (see the separate entry on presupposition triggers for more). In these examples, the apparent presuppositions are given in italics:

Factive: John knows there is life on Mars. (*There is life on Mars*)

Clefting: It is John who arrived. (*Someone arrived.*)

Wh-question: Who called? (*Someone called.*)

What is taken for granted in making an utterance may not be satisfied. The point of the example, "The king of France is bald," is that here it is not: there is no king of France.

There are two views about what happens when a presupposition is not satisfied. On one view, the semantic theory of presuppositions, a statement with an unsatisfied presupposition has no truth value, that is, it is neither true nor false. This was the view taken by the philosopher Peter Strawson, who reintroduced the study of presupposition. ('Reintroduced' because in the late nineteenth century, the philosophers Sigwart and Frege had been concerned with the question, and there was a similar distinction in medieval philosophy between what an expression presupposed and what it denoted.)

Strawson's views on presupposition have been influential in semantics and philosophy and they led to a great deal of work on systems of logic with a truth-gap or three truth values. However, in linguistics the prevailing view since the 1970s has been that presuppositions are pragmatic phenomena. On this view, introduced by Robert Stalnaker, there are two possibilities when there is an utterance with a presupposition that is unsatisfied. Either the utterance is infelicitous, or (and this is more commonly the case) the presupposition is *accommodated*, which is to say that the information that is presupposed by the utterance but which was not previously part of the common ground is added to the common ground. In other words, a speaker can express certain information as though it were taken for granted, and if the strategy works, this information is from then on treated as known. As Grice

had previously said, if a speaker says, 'My aunt's cousin went to that concert,' the hearer would be expected to take it from the speaker that she did indeed have an aunt and that her aunt had a cousin.

A striking property of presuppositions is that they appear to be preserved under negation, in contrast to entailments of the proposition expressed and most implicatures. For example (on one reading) 'The king of France isn't bald' also takes for granted the existence of a king of France and 'John doesn't know that there is life on Mars' also takes for granted that there is life on Mars.

This property is sometimes called 'constancy under negation' and it has been taken as the standard test for presuppositions. However this test is difficult to apply to some sentences and does not always produce clear intuitions. For example, what, if anything, does 'Who did not call?' presuppose?

What is more, not every speaker who utters one of these negated sentences presupposes what they are supposed normally to presuppose. For example, hearing an argument about whether the king of France is bald, it is perfectly felicitous to say: 'The king of France isn't bald. There *is* no king of France.' In such cases, either there was no presupposition, or it was cancelled.

Many theorists think that presuppositions are cancellable, as implicatures are. On this view, cancellation may be explicit, as above, but it can also be a result of incompatibility of the potential presupposition with world knowledge. For example, 'before' is said to trigger presuppositions, as in:

John learned to type before finishing his book. (*John finished his book*)

But the following has no such presupposition:

John died before finishing his book.

The idea is that we know that dead people do not finish books, so the presupposition is cancelled by its incompatibility with world knowledge.

Returning to constancy under negation, it is one example of what is called the *projection problem* or the *presupposition projection problem*, a topic that has had a great deal of attention. (The term 'projection problem' and the framing of the issue in these terms are due to joint work by the linguists D. Terence Langendoen and Harris Savin.) Embedding a phrase or a sentence which usually carries a presupposition inside a larger sentence sometimes does and sometimes does not result in a sentence with the same presupposition. We have seen

that embedding under negation can preserve presuppositions. A common way of expressing this is to say that negation is one example of a *hole*: a linguistic expression or construction that, as it were, lets presupposition through. As well as holes there are argued to be *plugs*, expressions which block presuppositions entirely, and *filters*, expressions which let only some presuppositions through. Verbs of reporting and saying are said to be plugs. For example, an utterance of 'Mary said that the king of France is bald' does not require the hearer to take for granted the existence of the king of France. Logical connectives such as conjunction ('and') and implication ('if . . . then . . .') are said to be filters, expressions that sometimes let presuppositions through but not always.

The simplest filtering cases are ones in which the first conjunct of a compound sentence asserts what the second part would normally presuppose. For example:

John stole the Mona Lisa and he regrets that he stole the Mona Lisa.

Uttering the whole sentence does not ask the hearer to take for granted that John stole the Mona Lisa, since that is asserted in the first conjunct, before the hearer gets to the part that is said normally to presuppose it.

Several different elaborate theories which try to account for these data have been formulated. The best known are due to the linguists Lauri Karttunen (working on his own and with Stanley Peters), Gerald Gazdar and Irene Heim. Almost all of this work on the projection problem takes for granted Stalnaker's view that presupposition is a pragmatic phenomenon, a property of utterances rather than sentences, strictly speaking, and that presupposition failure leads to accommodation or infelicity, rather than lack of truth value. However these theories all look to semantics and syntax for explanations for these pragmatic facts. The ability to trigger presuppositions is seen as a property of lexical items or constructions, and the 'projection' (or otherwise) of presuppositions is explained in terms of the larger sentence's components and structure.

An alternative view has been maintained by many pragmatic theorists, including Paul Grice, Deirdre Wilson, Ruth Kempson and Stephen Neale. On this view, the pre-theoretic intuitions that certain utterances ask the hearer to take something for granted are best explained without appealing to a separate presuppositional level of meaning. Theories which make presuppositions depend on lexical items and sentence structure are said to be writing the



properties of a speech act, assertion, into the lexicon. This is undesirable on general grounds and because it fails to predict that non-assertive utterances of sentences (e.g. as a guess, a request or a question) do not generally have the presuppositions that assertive uses would. For example, a guess that Martians criticize each other for looping the loop does not presuppose that they loop the loop – rather it guesses that they do.

In the case of definite descriptions, the non-presuppositional analysis goes back to Bertrand Russell. On a Russellian view of definite descriptions, the semantics of 'The king of France is bald' amount to: *There is a unique king of France and he is bald*. Usually, but not in all circumstances, the main point of asserting that the king of France is bald would be to comment on his lack of hair, and the speaker would indeed be taking for granted that the hearer knows, or would accept, that there is a king of France. But according to the pragmatic view these are simply facts about typical contexts and how the expression is often used and do not justify the setting up of a separate level of meaning.

This analysis has a natural explanation for the fact that the existence 'presupposition' of definites sometimes does and sometimes does not survive negation. On this view, this is a matter of scope. Depending on the scope taken by negation, 'It is not the case that the king of France is bald,' may mean that there is such an individual and he is not bald, or that there is no such individual. Presuppositional analyses usually explain these facts with an ambiguity theory of negation, distinguishing between 'internal' and 'external' negation, or between standard and metalinguistic negation.

See also: accommodation, implicature, filter, hole, plug

## Presupposition trigger

In work on presuppositions, 'triggers' are lexical items that are seen as giving rise to presuppositions. Some of the many types of trigger are listed here:

**Factives** (first type: e.g. *know*, *point out*, *discover*)

Mary pointed out that John cheated. (Said to presuppose that *John cheated*)

Mary did not point out that John cheated. (*John cheated*)

**Factives** (second type: e.g. regret, be glad that)

Mary regrets/does not regret that John cheated at cards. (*Mary believes that John cheated at cards*)

Mary is glad/not glad that John was caught (*Mary believes that John was caught*)

**Cleft and pseudo-cleft sentences**

It was John who marked the cards. (*Someone marked the cards*)

What John did was to install a mirror. (*John did something*)

**Change-of-state predicates** (e.g. stop, start, give up, take up)

John has/hasn't stopped cheating. (*John has been cheating*)

John has taken up chess (*John didn't play chess before*)

**'Implicative' predicates** (e.g. manage)

John managed/didn't manage to stop cheating. (*John tried to stop cheating*)

**Definite descriptions and universal quantification**

The king of France is tired. (*There is a king of France*)

Every cardsharp is found out (*There are cardsharps*)

**Wh-questions**

Who caught John? (*Someone caught John*)

How many years did he get? (*He got some years*)

Many other triggers have been proposed. Some of these are controversial even among presupposition theorists: for example that gender features on pronouns presuppose that the referent is of the appropriate sex.

It is not well understood why such varied expressions should give rise to presuppositions, nor whether for each of these utterances the intuition that it takes something for granted is best understood in terms of presuppositions in the first place.

See also: presupposition

## Primary performative

In J. L. Austin's work on speech acts, a primary performative is a performative utterance that does not contain a verb that names the act that is being

performed by the utterance. 'I'll give you £5 pounds if that nag comes in first,' might be uttered to perform the act of betting. In that case it would be a primary performative since it does not contain a verb meaning 'bet'. In contrast, 'I bet you £5 that horse doesn't win' is an explicit performative.

Some performatives can only be expressed as primary performatives. For example, persuading is a speech act, but it cannot be performed by uttering:

?? I hereby persuade you to leave your fortune to me.

See also: constative, explicit performative, performative, speech act

## Procedural meaning

According to relevance theory, linguistic items can possess procedural meaning as well as or instead of conceptual meaning. Conceptual meaning is the way that word meaning is standardly conceived: the concept that is encoded by a word becomes part of the explicit meaning of the utterance of a sentence containing that word. In contrast, procedural meaning constrains or steers the pragmatic inference processes that are responsible for utterance interpretation. Pronouns, tense and other indexical elements are seen as constraining the explicit content of the utterance, while other linguistic items such as discourse connectives (e.g. 'however', 'so', 'but') may act as constraints on the derivation of implicatures.

For example the demonstrative 'that' might encode a constraint that can be glossed as: *find a singular referent that is not speaker-proximal*. 'However' might encode a constraint best glossed as: *process what comes next as a denial of an expectation raised by the immediately preceding discourse*.

Some words, such as the sentence adverbial 'frankly', have been proposed to contribute to conceptual, truth-conditional meaning on some occasions (e.g. the first example below) and on others to contribute procedural constraints (e.g. the second example).

She told him frankly what she thought of him.

Frankly, I don't give a damn.

Procedural meaning in relevance theory covers much of the ground explained in Gricean pragmatics in terms of conventional implicatures, and brings this together with a cognitive description of the character/content distinction for pronouns, demonstratives and similar items.

See also: character, conceptual meaning, content, discourse connectives

## Processing effort

In relevance theory, and in cognitive science more generally, processing effort is the mental resources required to process a stimulus or other input. For example, in theories of reasoning, the processing effort for an inference is regarded as proportional to the number of inferential steps required, or the complexity of the mental model that is built.

Processing effort is one of two factors in the definition of relevance: the greater the effort required to process an input, the less relevant it is, all other things being equal.

Relevance theory postulates that utterance interpretation follows a least-effort path, so the first interpretation of an utterance to be constructed and tested is the one that requires the least processing effort. If it is rejected, the interpretation requiring the next lowest processing effort is tried, and so on.

See also: accessibility, relevance, relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure

## Projection problem

Also known as the presupposition projection problem. This is the problem of understanding why and in what circumstances the presuppositions of an utterance of a phrase or sentence are also presupposed by an utterance of that phrase when it is embedded within a larger sentence. For example, an utterance of 'John certainly regrets stealing the Mona Lisa' is said to presuppose that John stole the Mona Lisa (or at least that he believes that he stole it). Embedding the sentence as the consequent of a conditional gives a sentence that is said to have the same presupposition:

If John has any conscience at all then he certainly regrets stealing the Mona Lisa.

But utterances of the following sentence do not share that presupposition:

If it is John who did it, then he certainly regrets stealing the Mona Lisa.

Explaining such observations systematically is the projection problem.

See also: presupposition, presupposition trigger

## Proposition

The word 'proposition' is used in pragmatics in a technical sense which comes from logic and philosophy. The term can be defined by the claim that every statement that is either true or false expresses a proposition. For example the statement that 'All men are equal' expresses the proposition that all men are equal.

The same proposition can be expressed in different languages: 'Elephants are scared of mice' and 'Les éléphants ont peur des souris' express the same proposition.

Propositions come in several varieties logically, including simple predications (e.g. *Snow is white*); expressions of relations (e.g. *John loves Mary*); and quantifications (e.g. *Some cats like cheese*). Joining propositions with logical connectives creates compound propositions: for example *John loves Mary and Mary smokes*.

Out of context, individual words and phrases that are not full sentences do not express propositions, but uttered in a context they may. For example, Barbara's response in this dialogue expresses the proposition that Barbara has tea and toast for breakfast:

Archie: What do you have for breakfast?

Barbara: Tea and toast.

Sentences that contain indexicals also fall short of expressing propositions, although utterances of sentences typically express propositions. For example, there are many propositions that 'He is there' could be used to express: the proposition that Noam Chomsky is in London, the proposition that Yo Yo Ma is in Paris, and so on.

See also: indexical, proposition expressed

## Propositional attitude

An expression from philosophy of language. A propositional attitude is a mental state that has propositional content.

Different attitudes can be taken to one and the same proposition. Consider the proposition that there is life on other planets. You might, for example, believe it (one attitude) or doubt it (another), or you might have towards it simultaneously the attitudes of hope and fear.

In many languages, propositional attitudes can be expressed by uttering a sentence in which a sentence is embedded under a matrix clause that has a propositional attitude verb. Here the embedded sentence is bracketed; the propositional attitude verbs are underlined:

John believes/doubts/hopes that [there is life on other planets].

Speech-act theory has investigated connections between propositional attitudes and illocutionary acts: for example between assertions and beliefs and between intentions and promises.

See also: proposition

## Propositional concept

A term from philosophy of language, used in formal pragmatics and formal semantics to mean a function from possible worlds into propositions. In this way of formalizing the content of assertive speech acts, propositions are themselves taken to be functions from possible worlds into truth values. Therefore a propositional concept is a function from possible worlds to a function from possible worlds to truth values.

A proposition can be represented as a list of truth values, one for each possible world. To represent a propositional concept, a two-dimensional array of truth values is needed.

## Propositional radical

A term introduced by Kent Bach to describe the semantic content of sentences that do not encode complete propositions. An utterance of 'John is ready' might express the proposition that John is ready to enrol on a Ph.D. programme; on another occasion an utterance of the same sentence

might express the proposition that he is ready to have breakfast. What these two propositions have in common is the propositional radical encoded by the sentence uttered. The term 'propositional fragment' is also sometimes used.

A hearer of a sentence which encodes a propositional radical needs to infer pragmatically what was the proposition expressed by the speaker. In Bach's terminology this aspect of pragmatic processing is called *completion*.

## Proposition expressed

By the phrase 'proposition expressed', pragmatic theorists mean the proposition expressed by the utterance in question, or, more precisely, the proposition expressed by the speaker in making the utterance in question. For assertions the proposition expressed is (roughly) whatever it is that the speaker puts forward as true in making the utterance. For example, if you utter the sentence 'Bertrand Russell lived in Cambridge in 1911' as a sincere assertion then you have expressed the proposition that Bertrand Russell lived in Cambridge in 1911, and you have put that proposition forward as true.

Because of indexicals and ambiguity, the words that are uttered must often fall short of expressing any determinate proposition. For example, to know what proposition is expressed by an utterance of 'He has bought a bat', the referent of 'he' must be found, and the correct sense of the ambiguous word 'bat' decided on.

Pragmatics is primarily concerned with what is communicated or what is meant overall, rather than what sentences mean, hence the focus on the proposition expressed by the speaker on a particular occasion. According to the linguistic underdeterminacy thesis, even if the result yielded by performing disambiguation and reference assignment on the words uttered is propositional, it very often differs from the proposition expressed by the speaker. For example, the proposition expressed by an utterance of 'I have fed the dog' is likely to be that the speaker has fed the dog *that day* or that she has fed the dog *that evening*. In most circumstances, a speaker uttering that sentence would not convey the proposition that is most closely connected with the sentence: that she has fed the dog, *full stop*, that is that she has fed the dog at some point in the past.

In Grice's work on conversation and in subsequent Gricean pragmatics, what is said by a speaker in making an utterance is taken to be propositional.

This is why disambiguation and reference assignment are prerequisites for arriving at what is said.

Utterances often convey a great deal more than the proposition they express. Grice's concept of implicature identifies some of what utterances convey beyond the proposition expressed and thus makes it easier to isolate the proposition expressed from these other pieces of meaning and information connected with or conveyed by an utterance. Thus the proposition expressed by an utterance stands in opposition to the implicatures of the utterance (and perhaps to other things such as presuppositions of the utterance and non-communicated implications of the utterance). In the dialogue that follows, the main point of Bill's utterance is to answer Albertine's question, but it does so indirectly.

Albertine: What are we going to have for dinner?

Bill: I bought a deep fat fryer and potatoes on the way home.

Proposition expressed: *Bill bought a deep fat fryer and potatoes on the way home (that day).*

Implicature: *Albertine and Bill are going to have chips for dinner.*

A rule of thumb for determining the proposition expressed by an utterance is to imagine that the utterance is met by an objection such as 'That's not true,' and to ask oneself what 'That's not true' would deny in that context. In many cases this procedure helps to single out the proposition expressed. In the example above, uttering 'That's not true' in response to Bill one would be denying that Bill bought a deep fat fryer and potatoes on the way home. It is hard to imagine uttering 'That's not true' in this context as a denial that Albertine and Bill are going to have chips for dinner. So in the example this rule of thumb correctly picks out the proposition expressed rather than the implicature.

Use of the term 'the proposition expressed' implicitly assumes that each utterance expresses one proposition, or, if there are multi-sentence utterances, that each sentence in a multi-sentence utterance is used to express one proposition. However some utterances of single sentences apparently express more than one proposition. This was noted in the seventeenth-century Port Royal grammar, which gives this example:

Gassendi, who is the most astute of philosophers, believes there is a void in nature.



There are two propositions here: (1) Gassendi is the most astute of philosophers; and (2) Gassendi believes there is a void in nature.

In cases like this, we may have to speak of the *propositions* expressed rather than the proposition expressed. Equally, we might say that what is expressed is a complex proposition.

With this proviso about utterances which express multiple propositions, the notion of the proposition expressed is clear in cases where the utterance is an assertion, and is made by means of uttering a grammatically declarative sentence. With other sentence types and other speech acts the role of the proposition expressed is less clear. It is usual to treat imperatives and interrogatives as expressing (but not asserting) the proposition associated with the related declarative sentence.

For example, utterances of the following three sentences might all express the same proposition. The first sentence could be uttered in order to assert it. The second could be used to question it, and the third to order or request that it be made so (these are typical uses, but certainly not the only uses of declarative, interrogative and imperative sentences):

The door is shut. (declarative)

Is the door shut? (interrogative)

Shut the door! (imperative)

So the concept of the proposition expressed can be extended from assertions to questions and orders. However it is not clear that all utterances express propositions. There are speech acts, usually called performatives, that are not made with the intention of expressing any proposition. Instead, successful utterances of performatives create facts. An utterance of 'I bet you £5 that Liverpool win the cup' is typically used to make or place a bet, and when it is used this way it does not describe a state of affairs, but creates one: the situation in which there is a particular bet between the speaker and the addressee. In such cases the notion of a proposition expressed seems to lose clear applicability.

See also: explication, disambiguation, performative, reference assignment, truth-conditions, what is said

## Prosody

Prosody is variation in the rhythm, stress and intonation of speech at the level of utterances, rather than at the lexical level. For example, the difference in

stress between 'REcord' (the noun) and 'reCORD' (the verb) is not a prosodic difference, but the difference in stress positions in the following examples is prosodic:

Alice eats GRASS.

Alice EATS grass.

The interaction of prosody with syntactic structure, and the effect that prosody has on the interpretation of utterances are not well understood in general, although some aspects of these questions have received a lot of attention, such as the focus and topic of sentences.

Prosody can mark different speech acts: for example, in many languages certain intonation patterns are typical of questions. Prosodic variation also carries information about the speaker's emotions. Such information seems to be neither linguistically encoded nor, on most occasions, intended by the speaker to be conveyed.

See also: intonation

## **Protreptic utterance**

In Grice's work, a protreptic utterance is one that aims at producing a belief (or other response) in the hearer by showing the hearer that the speaker has that belief. Here is an example: a speaker says 'Clara is on the mat,' aiming the hearer to take the utterance as evidence that she (the speaker) believes that Clara is on the mat *and* because of that, for the hearer to come to think that Clara is on the mat.

Protreptic utterances are contrasted with exhibitivite utterances, where the main aim is just to get the hearer to see that the speaker holds a certain belief.

The protreptic/exhibitivite distinction can be generalized to imperatives and interrogatives. A protreptic imperative is one where the main aim is to get the hearer to carry out a certain action. A protreptic interrogative is one where the main aim is to get the hearer to answer the question asked.

See also: exhibitivite utterance

## Q-implicature

In neo-Gricean pragmatics, any implicature derived via the Q-principle is called a Q-implicature. Since the Q-principle enjoins the speaker to be as informative as possible, Q-implicatures are implicatures that arise from an apparent failure to be fully informative. For example, an utterance of 'Some Millwall supporters are violent,' may implicate that not all Millwall supporters are violent or that the speaker does not know all Millwall supporters to be violent, since it would have been more informative to say that all Millwall supporters are violent.

Another example is Grice's famous 'John is meeting a woman this evening,' which implicates that the woman John is meeting is not his wife (nor his sister, mother etc.).

See also: Q-principle

## Q-principle

In neo-Gricean pragmatics, the Q-principle (or Quantity-Principle) is one of a small number of principles thought to govern communicative behaviour and the production of implicatures. On one formulation, the Q-principle is: *Make your contribution sufficient; Say as much as you can (given the R-principle).*

The Q-principle is intended to subsume Grice's first maxim of quantity and his first and second manner maxims. In the work of Larry Horn, who proposed the Q-principle, it interacts with the R-principle, which takes the place of Grice's other conversational maxims except the quality maxims.

The Q-principle enjoins the speaker to maximize the amount of information encoded. It is therefore described as a lower-bounding principle, and is postulated to be what is responsible for implicatures which work along the following lines: The speaker said X, but it would have been more informative to say Y, so Y must be false, or at least the speaker must not have known Y to be true. Scalar implicatures are said to be of this type.

Levinson's I- and M-principles are intended to cover roughly the same area as Horn's Q-principle.

See also: I-principle, M-principle, Q-implicature

## Q-scale

A set of linguistic items, ordered in terms of semantic strength and entailment. Also known as a Horn-scale, after its inventor, Larry Horn. Some Q-scales are:

<some, many, most, all>

<good, excellent>

<cool, cold>

Use of a weaker item in a Q-scale often implicates that an utterance of the sentence containing the stronger item would not have been true or evidenced. In cases where the speaker is thought to be well-informed, the implicature will be that the sentence with the stronger item is not true. 'Some Xs are Y' often implicates that not all Xs are Y. More generally, it implicates that the speaker does not know whether all Xs are Y.

See also: Q-principle, scalar implicature

## Quessertion

A type of speech act often found in the works of Paul Grice. To *quessert* an idea is to put it forward while stressing that it is questionable: as the name suggests, it is somewhere between an assertion and a question; or perhaps a questionable assertion.

If you *quessert* a proposition *p*, what you are committed to is that *it is perhaps possible that someone might assert that p* or that *it might be claimed that p*. This can be written in formal notation as  $? \vdash p$ .

## Reference assignment

The name of the process by which the hearer of an utterance assigns objects to indexical words such as pronouns. For example, given an utterance of the following sentence, to understand the proposition that the speaker has expressed the hearer has to find referents for 'She' and 'him':

She kicked him.

This sentence might be used to express the proposition that Cleopatra kicked Julius Caesar, or that Xanthippe kicked Socrates, or any of many other propositions.

In most modern pragmatic theories, reference assignment is seen as a matter of reconstructing the speaker's referential intentions using clues from the context.

See also: disambiguation, indexical, proposition expressed, what is said

## Referential/attributive distinction

This is a distinction between two apparently different ways of using definite descriptions, made by the philosopher Keith Donnellan. Definite descriptions are phrases of the form 'The X', where X is a nominal restrictor, for example 'The Jaguar driver'; or phrases of the form 'X's Y', such as 'Jane's husband'.

One way of using a definite description is to talk about whichever individual (or individuals, for plural definite descriptions) satisfies the material in the nominal restrictor. This is the attributive use. Another way of using a definite description is to pick out and talk about a certain individual (or individuals, for plural definite descriptions).

For example, suppose two people are talking about tomorrow's race, in which there is just one Jaguar. They know that the Jaguar is faster than the other cars. They have no idea who will be driving the Jaguar. One says to the other:

The Jaguar driver has an unfair advantage.

What he means can be glossed as: *The Jaguar driver, whoever he is, has an unfair advantage*. This is an attributive use.

Now suppose that these two people have seen Smith, who they now know is the driver of the Jaguar, being fitted with special bionic technology to improve his reflexes. One of them says:

The Jaguar driver has an unfair advantage.

In this case, the meaning can be glossed as: *Smith has an unfair advantage*. This is a referential use.

There has been considerable debate about whether this intuitive distinction reflects a difference in the proposition expressed, and, if so, whether that difference in truth conditions is best explained in terms of linguistic ambiguity or by a pragmatic account.

See also: definite descriptions

## Register

In sociolinguistics, the term register is used to mean any part of a language or dialect that is only used in a certain social environment. For example a speaker of a northern English variety of English might use a distinct plural form of the second person pronoun – ‘youse’ – with family and in other relatively informal settings, preferring the higher register word ‘you’ in writing and formal speech.

## Reinforceability

A property of conversational implicatures. Since implicatures are not explicitly stated, but inferred, there is not generally a sense of infelicitous redundancy if the content of an implicature is also explicitly stated, as in the first example here. In contrast, trying to reinforce part of what is explicitly said is usually infelicitous, as in the second example:

Some cats are black and not all cats are black.

?? Some cats are black and at least one cat is black.

See also: calculability, cancellability, indeterminacy, non-detachability

## Relevance

As a technical term in relevance theory, relevance is a property of inputs to cognitive processes. The amount of relevance depends on the effort an input would require to process and on the cognitive effects that would be gained by doing so: the greater the cognitive effects, the greater the relevance; the greater the processing effort, the lower the relevance.

See also: cognitive effects, Cognitive Principle of Relevance, Communicative Principle of Relevance, processing effort

## Relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure

Relevance theory claims that utterance interpretation involves this procedure:

Following a least-effort path, construct an interpretation of the utterance. If the interpretation is relevant enough (i.e. if it provides enough cognitive effects for the processing effort expended) and it is the most relevant one compatible with the speaker's abilities and preferences, accept it as the intended interpretation. Otherwise construct the next most accessible interpretation and evaluate it, and so on.

Since this procedure follows a least-effort path, it always starts with construction and assessment of the most accessible interpretation.

The comprehension procedure is a heuristic: it is not guaranteed to arrive at the right interpretation. It is claimed to be an ecologically rational procedure since it exploits the environmental regularity that each ostensive stimulus carries a fallible guarantee that it is optimally relevant to the hearer, and it does so relatively fast and frugally.

See also: Communicative Principle of Relevance, presumption of optimal relevance

## Relevance theory

A theory of cognition and communication developed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, built around a technical notion of relevance: the balance of cognitive effects and processing effort.

Relevance theory claims that human cognition tends to seek maximal relevance, that is, that cognition generally seeks the greatest gain in accurate representations of the world for the minimum processing effort.

In pragmatics, relevance theory attempts to provide an account of utterance interpretation for openly communicative stimuli. Following Grice, the claim is that utterance interpretation is a form of inference to the best explanation. Relevance theory claims that each utterance raises a presumption of its own optimal relevance and that this mandates the relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure, a heuristic that follows a least-effort path in the generation and evaluation of hypotheses about the speaker's intended interpretation.

Relevance theory proposes that interpretation is governed by one principle, rather than guided by multiple maxims. The inference process, guided by this Communicative Principle, takes facts about the utterance, including linguistic meaning, as input and produces a complete interpretation: explicatures, implicatures and selected context. The proposition expressed is arrived at through inference, and in mutual adjustment with the implicatures and contextual assumptions.

See also: Communicative Principle of Relevance, Cognitive Principle of Relevance, relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure

## **Repetition**

Repeated words can be used to convey emphasis. Examples are common in spoken utterances:

In the summer in Taiwan it is really really hot.  
I am very very sorry.

Some aspects of the phenomenon are syntactic: not all classes of words can be repeated, and the details vary from language to language. The effects, though, can be explained in pragmatic terms. For example, relevance theory claims that repetition of a word puts the hearer to a small amount of extra processing effort, and this should be justified by at least a small increase in the cognitive effects of the utterance. A Gricean explanation in terms of the brevity maxim is also possible.

## **Representative act**

A type of speech act in Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts. Representatives, also known as assertives, are speech acts in which the speaker expresses



a proposition as a description or representation of states of affairs. They include assertions and statements, but also suppositions, hypotheses, claims, conclusions and reports. They have a word-to-world direction of fit: the speaker attempts to make what she says fit the world.

See also: commissive act, declaration, directive act, expressive act

## Rhetic act

In speech-act theory, the act of uttering words with the intention of referring to certain objects and with the intention that ambiguous words and phrases are interpreted in a certain way. A rhetic act is one component of the basic-level speech act, the locutionary act. A locutionary act also typically comprises a phonic and a phatic act.

For example, if a speaker says 'He is at the bank' then in performing the locutionary act of making this utterance, she has uttered the word 'he' with, perhaps, the intention of referring to her husband. She also means the ambiguous expression 'bank' to be taken in its 'financial institution' sense. These are aspects of the rhetic act.

At the level of the rhetic act, ambiguous expressions have been disambiguated and reference assigned to indexicals, steps that must be taken to arrive at a proposition, given the linguistic form of an utterance (i.e. given a particular phatic act). For Austin, the founder of speech-act theory, disambiguation and reference assignment are to be taken for granted in a sense, as part of the locutionary act, just as Grice took them for granted as contributing to what is said.

See also: illocutionary act, locutionary act, perlocutionary act, phatic act, rhetic act, speech acts

## R-implicature

In neo-Gricean pragmatics, an R-implicature is any implicature generated by the R-principle. The R-principle enjoins the speaker to be economical; to produce as little linguistic material as possible. Therefore R-implicatures are those in which the speaker says less than she means. A paradigm example is Grice's: a speaker uttering 'I broke a finger yesterday' would (except in rather unusual circumstances) implicate that the broken finger was one of the speaker's own.

See also: R-principle

## R-principle

In neo-Gricean pragmatics, the R-principle (or Relation-principle) is one of a small set of principles which govern communicative behaviour. On one formulation, the R-principle is: *Make your contribution necessary; Say no more than you must (given the Q-principle)*.

In Larry Horn's work, the R-principle is intended to supersede Grice's second maxim of quantity, and perhaps also his maxim of relation, and his third and fourth maxims of manner. It interacts with the Q-principle, which takes the place of Grice's other maxims.

The R-principle enjoins the speaker to minimize the amount of linguistic material uttered, or more generally to minimize the effort involved in speech. It is therefore described as an 'upper-bounding' principle. Its violation is postulated to be responsible for implicatures which communicate more than the speaker's words say. For example, Mary says 'I broke a finger yesterday' and implicates that she broke one of *her own* fingers.

According to Horn's division of pragmatic labour, the R-principle is not in operation when a marked expression is used; then the Q-principle comes into play, implicating the complement of an R-implicature.

The phenomena covered by Horn's R-principle are largely covered by the I-principle in Levinson's work.

See also: I-principle, Q-principle

## Saturation

Pragmatic effects on the proposition expressed are sometimes divided into free enrichment and saturation. Saturation is the provision of values from the context for variables or empty slots in the linguistic logical form of the utterance. In a sense, saturation is simply reference assignment, the process of providing values for indexicals. The term 'saturation', which was introduced by the philosopher François Recanati, is generally used in cases where it is postulated that there are 'hidden' indexicals: indexicals that are not explicitly realized in the overt (pronounced) linguistic material.

For example, the sentences below might be used to express the italicized propositions:

Everyone passed the exam.

*Everyone [in the class who was entered for the exam] passed the exam.*

I have eaten breakfast.

*I have eaten breakfast [today].*

In both cases the extra material might be due to saturation of hidden variables. Domain restriction of quantifiers (as in the first example) is often seen as saturation of a domain variable. In the second example, the perfective aspect morpheme 'have' may introduce a variable for time into the logical form. It remains controversial which pragmatic effects on the proposition expressed are due to saturation and which are cases of free enrichment.

See also: free enrichment

## Scalar implicature

Often, use of a semantically or pragmatically weaker linguistic item conveys that the use of a related stronger item would be inappropriate. For example, an utterance of 'Some pulsars are binary' might implicate that not all pulsars are binary, or that the speaker does not know or does not want to commit herself to the proposition that all pulsars are binary, given that 'some' is weaker than 'all' in some sense.

The first kind of implicature can be seen as following from Grice's first quality maxim: Do not say what you believe to be false. The second quality maxim (Do not say that for which you have insufficient evidence) can be seen as generating the second type.

Larry Horn drew attention to these implicatures. They arise, he claimed, when there is a Q-scale: two or more linguistic items which can be put in order of semantic strength, for example:

<some, many, most, all>

The strength of an item and its presence on a scale may be pragmatic rather than semantic, that is, dependent on the context. Consider a context in which John has been to a garden party at Buckingham Palace:

Mary: Did anything exciting happen?

John: Well, I met the Duke of Edinburgh.

John's reply may implicate that he did not meet the queen.

It is a topic of recent research whether the phenomena described here are best seen as implicatures or as pragmatic enrichment of the proposition expressed.

See also: generalized conversational implicature, Q-scale

## Scope principle

This is a rule of thumb concerning whether something that is communicated is part of the proposition expressed. The sentence is embedded within the scope of a logical operator and anything that falls under the scope of that operator is taken as belonging to the proposition expressed.

For example, the use of 'and' can convey the meaning 'and then', or 'and as a result of that' in utterances of sentences such as this one:

Mary swore at John and he fell downstairs.

Is the pragmatically added meaning part of the proposition expressed or an implicature? We can use the scope test as an indication, as in the following examples:

If Mary swore at John and he fell downstairs then she may be responsible for his fall, but if John fell downstairs and Mary swore at him then she is not.

It's not true that Mary swore at John and he fell downstairs; he fell downstairs and she swore at him.

If the propositions expressed in these examples by 'Mary swore at John and he fell downstairs' and 'John fell downstairs and Mary swore at him' are identical then the examples should both seem strange or contradictory, but most informants find them fine.

## Semantic illusion

A phenomenon discovered by the psycholinguists Erickson and Mattson and also known as the *Moses illusion* after one of the best-known examples:

How many animals of each type did Moses take into the ark?

This question usually receives the answer 'Two', which neglects that it was not Moses but Noah who took animals into the ark.

Another well-known example is the following question:

In an air crash on the border between two countries where should the authorities bury the survivors?

Despite the name, semantic illusions are a pragmatic phenomenon: there is a failure to fully interpret the question, presumably because giving the answer seems more important.

## Semantic innocence

This is the idea that the contribution to meaning made by a linguistic expression should be the same on every occasion. For example, the name 'London' refers to the same thing in both the examples below.

London is a famous city.

John lives in London.

Complications arise for indexicals such as pronouns. For example, the word 'he' can be used to refer to different individuals on different occasions.

A further complication is that according to some theories of semantics the contribution to meaning made by a name in an opaque context, such as a belief report, is not its referent, in order to make sense of sentences such as:

John believes that Mumbai is much more interesting than Bombay.

See also: compositionality

## Semantics

The study of meaning. Both semantics and pragmatics involve studying meaning, but they are generally seen as different fields.

In linguistics, semantics is taken to be the study of the contribution made to meaning by the meanings of linguistic items and the way that they are combined. Note that the term 'semantics' is used both for the study of linguistic meaning and for its subject matter. Both words and sentences have semantics: 'vixen' means *female fox*, and 'Yuki wa shiroi desu' means *snow is white*. Lexical semantics deals with word meaning, and compositional semantics deals with the way that the meanings of lexical items combine to give phrase and sentence meaning.

On this view of semantics, pragmatics takes up where semantics leaves off: semantics is concerned with the meaning that a phrase has intrinsically, and pragmatics is concerned with what is conveyed by a particular utterance of a phrase, by a speaker, in a context.

In philosophy, *semantics* is often used as a catch-all term to refer to (the study of) all aspects of meaning.

See also: semantics-pragmatics interface, syntax

## Semantics-pragmatics interface

This phrase is applied to research which belongs both to pragmatics and to semantics. The borderline between the two areas is disputed territory, and some issues that are placed on the interface by one theorist might be seen as entirely semantic or entirely pragmatic by others.

The borderline can be seen as falling at the division between encoded and inferred aspects of meaning, between truth-conditional and non-truth-conditional aspects of meaning, or between sentence meaning and speaker meaning.

Issues that are commonly seen as interface questions include indexicality (and deixis more generally), disambiguation, pragmatic modulation of word meaning and non-truth-conditional but encoded aspects of meaning.

See also: semantics

## Semiotics

The study of all aspects of signs, signals and their uses, including, but not limited to, linguistic signs such as words. Semiotics can be divided into syntax, the study of the arrangement of signs; semantics, the study of the relations of signs to their referents; and pragmatics, the study of the effects of the uses of signs on their users. It was in this context that the term 'pragmatics' was coined by the philosopher Charles Morris.

On this broad conception, semiotics bids to encompass all of linguistics and pragmatics, as well as such diverse topics as roadside signs and the fashion industry. However inferential pragmatic theories fall outside of semiotics since it maintains a code model of communication.

See also: code model, inferential model

## Sentence

A sequence of words that is grammatically complete, with a main clause, and, optionally, sub-clauses.

Sentences are distinct from utterances in at least two ways. First, many utterances are not of sentences, but of isolated words or phrases, such as: 'Water!', 'Good grief!', 'Last Tuesday', 'On the top shelf'. Other utterances are entirely non-linguistic (e.g. thumbs-up, pointing, waving).

Secondly, even when an utterance is of a complete sentence, the sentence and the utterance are not the same. A sentence is a syntactic object with grammatical properties. An utterance is a speaker's communicative act, or the product of that act. An utterance happens at a certain time and place and can be (for example) loud or quiet and can include non-linguistic gestures as well as or instead of linguistic items: a sentence has none of these properties.

See also: syntax, utterance

## Signal

In information theory and the code model of communication, the signal is an encoded version of the message, which the transmitter sends to the receiver. Applying a code model to verbal communication, signals would be utterances in natural language.

This is in contrast to modern pragmatics where utterances are seen as communicative actions which the speaker uses to provide the hearer with clues about the intended meaning.

See also: code model, inferential model, message

## Simile

A figure of speech in which one type of thing is explicitly compared with or likened to another. The comparisons involved can be novel, or conventionalized like 'as dead as a doornail' and 'as clean as a new pin'.

Some similes are literally true, if not very precise:

Zebras are like horses with stripes.

The truth value of other similes is not so clear, although one might argue that everything resembles any other thing to *some* degree. Consider:

My love is like a red red rose.

The effects of a more figurative simile like this one are very similar to those involved in metaphor. Compare: 'My love is a red red rose.' In both cases it is difficult to paraphrase exactly what is conveyed. A classical theory is that use of a metaphor conveys a related simile. However, explaining metaphor in terms of simile leaves unanalysed the creative element of both.

There is also an affinity between metaphor and hyperbole. Many similes are somewhat hyperbolic. For example:

Jack was as big as a barn door, but he jumped up as quick as a flash.

Since similes are not generally false they are not covered by Grice's account of some of the tropes of figurative speech in terms of violation of a maxim of truthfulness.

See also: conversational maxims, hyperbole, figurative speech, metaphor



## Sincerity condition

In speech-act theory, the sincerity condition is a condition on the fully felicitous performance of a speech act. For example, in making a bet the speaker must intend to pay out if she loses. If she makes a bet without this intention then her bet is in a certain way insincere. Similarly, the sincerity condition on a promise is that the speaker intends to carry out the promised course of action.

If the sincerity conditions of a speech act are not met then it is performed, but it is an abuse (in Austin's terminology). Sincerity conditions are not a consideration for certain speech acts, for example naming a ship.

In Searle's systematization of speech-act theory, the sincerity condition is one of four elements of the felicity conditions.

See also: abuse, essential conditions, preparatory conditions

## Sophisticated understanding

In relevance theory, sophisticated understanding is the third level of pragmatic development. A child or adult who is capable of sophisticated understanding is one who acts on the basis that speakers are not always benevolent – they sometimes lie – and that speakers are not always competent – they do not express themselves as clearly or succinctly as they might.

Thus, instead of simply looking for an interpretation of an utterance that would make the utterance relevant, a sophisticated understander is capable of looking for an interpretation on the assumption that the speaker thought the utterance was relevant (in the case of unclear and other suboptimal utterances), or on the assumption that the speaker wanted the utterance to seem relevant (in the case of a lie).

See also: naive optimism, cautious optimism, relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure

## Speaker

The producer of an utterance. Since utterances can be spoken, written or in sign language, or can be non-linguistic gestures, the word 'speaker', used as a technical term in pragmatics, is not limited to people who produce spoken sentences. Instead, a speaker is the producer of any communicative act.

Obviously in a dialogue each participant will typically be both speaker and hearer at different times, and perhaps even at the same time, since utterances can overlap.

See also: hearer, utterance

## Speaker meaning

What a speaker meant in making an utterance is generally called *speaker meaning* or *utterance meaning*. The most influential account of speaker meaning comes from the philosopher Paul Grice's theory of meaning which defines what a speaker (nonnaturally) means by her utterance in terms of certain of her intentions, as follows: 'The speaker, *S*, (nonnaturally) meant something by *x*' is roughly equivalent to 'S intended the utterance of *x* to produce some effect in the audience by means of the recognition of this intention.' Grice called this intention to mean something an M-intention.

According to this highly compressed definition, there are three intentions that are required for a speaker *S* to mean something by an utterance of *x*:

- (i) *S* intends *S*'s utterance of *x* to produce a certain response *r* in a certain audience, *A*.
- (ii) *S* intends *A* to recognize *S*'s intention (i).
- (iii) *S* intends *A*'s recognition of *S*'s intention (i) to function as at least part of *A*'s reason for *A*'s response *r*.

According to this theory, while what a speaker means depends on her intentions, nevertheless the encoded (or 'timeless') meanings of words and the way they are put together act as constraints on speaker meaning, since a speaker cannot rationally intend the hearer to grasp a meaning that would not occur to him.

The specifics of Grice's definition of speaker meaning have been challenged (see biographical entry on Grice), but it is generally accepted in pragmatics that communication is inferential and intentional, in the sense that a hearer who understands what a speaker meant has inferred an intention or intentions of the speaker from some of her behaviour: from the fact that she said a certain word or phrase in a certain way, in a certain context.

See also: natural and nonnatural meaning

## Speech acts

According to speech-act theory, there are many things that speakers can do by uttering words and sentences. Making statements of fact or assertions (the traditional focus of philosophy of language) is only one of these things. We also make guesses, ask questions, make promises, place bets, take marriage vows, give orders, make requests and so on. Speech-act theory categorizes all of these as illocutionary acts, each with a particular illocutionary force (i.e. *guessing, questioning, promising, betting* etc.).

Speech-act theory was effectively founded by the philosopher J. L. Austin's book 'How to Do Things With Words' in which he made the point that utterances have force as well as meaning. He also introduced a possible distinction there between performatives (utterances that do things) and constatives (utterances which merely describe states of affairs). Naming is a good example of a performative. A speaker saying 'I name this ship *The Nautilus*' is not describing how things are but setting up a new state of affairs.

Constatives have truth conditions. The equivalent for performatives, according to Austin, is felicity conditions, that is, conditions which must be satisfied for the act to come off successfully. For example, a speaker naming a ship must be the designated namer and must say the phrase at the right time.

Austin argued that all utterances should be seen as performatives in the sense that they all have one force or another. Even such apparent constatives as statements and assertions are best treated as doing something: namely asserting or stating.

Speech-act theory distinguishes between three kinds of act that may be performed by any utterance, according to Austin's preferred account. As well as the illocutionary act, there is the locutionary act and the perlocutionary act.

The locutionary act is the act of saying a particular sentence (or word or phrase) with a particular meaning. It can itself be divided into the act of making certain speech sounds (the phonic act), the act of saying certain words and phrases (the phatic act) and the act of expressing a certain meaning, perhaps including reference to certain entities (rhetic act).

The illocutionary act is the act performed in making the utterance, such as promising, requesting, stating, warning or betting. The perlocutionary act is the act of bringing about certain effects by means of the utterance.

For example, the following utterance might perform the illocutionary act of warning and the perlocutionary act of getting the hearer to move his car:

Did you know there's a traffic warden coming down this side of the street?

The distinction between the illocutionary and perlocutionary effects of an utterance is not always clear in practice. However, the claim made by speech-act theory is that there is a clear conceptual distinction between grasping the illocutionary force of an utterance and what one does as a result.

Austin called the recognition by the hearer of the force of the speech-act 'uptake'. Returning to the example above, uptake is achieved if the speaker succeeds in warning the hearer. It would fail if (for example) the hearer took the utterance as simply a request for information, successfully recognizing the meaning of the utterance at the locutionary level but failing to grasp the intended illocutionary force. Note that successful uptake of a warning does not require that the hearer takes action, just that he takes the utterance as a warning. Equally, successful uptake of an act of offering a bet involves the hearer realizing that the bet is offered; whether he accepts the bet or not is a perlocutionary, not an illocutionary question.

Most investigation of speech acts, particularly in linguistics, has focused on illocutionary acts and illocutionary force. Some such work is descriptive, with the aim of cataloguing the possible illocutionary forces and their felicity conditions, and grouping the huge variety of illocutionary acts into a taxonomy of types, such as commissives, directives and so on.

There are several different taxonomies of speech acts. John Searle's has been the most influential. He proposes that speech acts fall into five types, categorized on the basis of 'direction of fit' (see below) and what they express. The types are commissive acts, declarations, directive acts, expressive acts and representative acts (see also individual entries).

*Representative acts* are similar to Austin's examples of constatives. They include assertions and statements and involve an attempt to describe the world. Searle called this a word-to-world direction of fit: the speaker aims to get her words to fit the way that the world is.

*Directives* are orders, requests and the like. According to Searle they are characterized by a world-to-word direction of fit: the task of the hearer is to make the world match up with what the speaker has said.

*Commissives* are speech acts such as promising and threatening that commit the speaker to a certain course of action. They are also said to have a world-to-word direction of fit. The difference between commissives and directives, according to Searle, is that commissives express speaker intentions while directives express desires that the speaker has about what the hearer is to do.

*Expressives*, which include thanking, praising, blaming and apologizing, are said to express speaker emotions. According to Searle, they do not have a direction of fit.

*Declarations* correspond closely to most of Austin's original examples of performatives: utterances that change the world rather than describing it, such as finding a defendant guilty or firing an employee. These speech acts are said to have both a word-to-world and world-to-word direction of fit.

Some theorists would divide this category into two, on the basis that some declarations make official a judgement or a finding about how things are, while other declarations create new facts. For example, the foreman of a jury pronounces that the jury *finds* the defendant guilty. The speech act serves both to report the jury's assessment of the defendant's guilt and to make that guilt official. In contrast, when a boss fires an employee, the employment is ended, not found to be ended (although of course the boss may have her reasons). The same contrast exists between a cricket umpire giving a batsman out and the captain declaring.

There has been controversy about whether illocutionary force (or illocutionary force potential) is linguistically encoded or must be inferred. This debate is sometimes summarized crudely as the question whether speech-act theory belongs to semantics or pragmatics.

In early speech-act theory, it was assumed that sentences encode illocutionary force potential. It was thought that what range of illocutionary speech acts a sentence could be used to perform was a function of sentence type. For example, declarative sentences are used for assertive speech acts, and imperative sentences for directive speech acts. This is the semantic variant of speech-act theory, with the contribution of pragmatics reduced to explaining how the hearer works out which of the possible illocutionary speech acts from the range fixed by the sentence type is performed by a particular utterance.

However, most theorists now agree that there is no direct link between the syntactic form of a sentence and the speech acts it can perform. Declarative sentences can be used without assertive force, as when they are embedded in conditionals, when they are used ironically, and in giving examples. Imperative sentences can be used without directive force, in the sense that the speaker need not be trying to get the hearer to do anything. For example, they are often used to give permission, as with an utterance of 'We're out of the office now. Smoke if you like, although I'd rather you didn't.' They are also used for wishes, expressing an outcome over which neither speaker nor addressee may have any control, as with 'Get well soon.'

In consequence it is generally thought that sentence types (syntactic) encode moods (semantic) and the pragmatic system is responsible for determining which speech acts can be performed by uttering sentences of a certain mood. The goal of understanding illocutionary acts in this way has also proved difficult to attain, however, since it is hard to characterize the moods without simply providing for each mood an unexplained catalogue of speech acts that it is used to perform.

The result of this debate has been a tendency to understand speech-act theory as part of pragmatics rather than semantics. In fact, the analysis of some speech acts goes beyond the study of speaker meaning or communication, and into sociology and anthropology. Whether this aspect of speech-act theory is regarded as part of pragmatics depends on whether pragmatics is taken to be concerned with communication or with the use of language in all of its variety.

Speech acts of the type called 'declarations' above are not, or not primarily, communicative acts, as the philosopher Peter Strawson pointed out, but elements of social conventions or rituals which bring about social states of affairs. They are often regarded as falling into a separate category: institutional speech acts. The distinction is sometimes blurred because the utterance often also serves as a report: the boss fires the employee and tells him he is fired all in one utterance: 'You are fired.' The verdict in a trial is given in front of the defendant, in public; thus the utterance pronouncing his guilt also informs him and society of his guilt. However, there are some speech acts that are performed largely or entirely in private. For example, US President Obama had himself sworn in for a second time on the day after his inauguration, since there was some doubt about whether the initial

swearing-in was carried out correctly given that he stumbled over some of the words. This is as predicted by Austin, for whom one felicity condition was that the procedure be carried out completely and correctly. The point of this example here, though, is that the second (or perhaps first) swearing-in was performed in private. Certain traditional rites which must be performed by the Emperor of Japan in complete seclusion provide an even stronger illustration of the point.

Of course there are also many cases where the audience is essential. It is futile, for example, to attempt to make an apology or a bet with no addressee. In such cases the uptake, that is, the recognition of the illocutionary force intended by the speaker, is an essential condition for the success of the utterance as an act of communication. From the point of view of pragmatics, one major achievement of speech-act theory has been to draw attention to such cases. Another has been to show that linguistic form radically underdetermines illocutionary force, and that uptake must therefore be explained in pragmatic terms.

See also: felicity conditions, illocutionary act, performative

## Speech Act Schema

In Bach and Harnish's work on speech-act theory and communication, the Speech Act Schema (SAS) governs communication. Their theory of communication is inferential, following Grice. The role of the Speech Act Schema is to explain what a speaker can expect a hearer to infer from an utterance, given the context and certain assumptions about the utterance and about utterances in general. The schema can be written as follows:

*A speaker, S is F-ing that P if in the presence of some hearer, H, S utters some e in some language, L, intending, and expecting (following the Linguistic Presumption, the Communicative Presumption and the Presumption of Literalness) H to recognize that he intends H to infer that S is F-ing that P. On occasion S may be also F' -ing that Q.*

Here *F* and *F'* are illocutionary forces and *P* and *Q* are propositions.

See also: Communicative Presumption, literal meaning

## Stimulus

In biology, a stimulus is usually defined as a perceptible change in the environment of an organism or system. Note that a stimulus has to be perceptible,

but not necessarily perceived: it must involve a change that is large enough in magnitude to be registered by a sense of the organism for which it might be a stimulus.

In relevance theory, 'stimulus' is defined as any modification of the environment that is *designed* to be perceived. On this conception, only organisms can give rise to stimuli.

According to relevance theory, utterances are a subset of stimuli: those stimuli that are produced with a communicative and an informative intention.

### Strong implicature

In relevance theory, a strong implicature is an implicature (i.e., a communicated implication of an utterance) which is the main communicative point of the utterance. The idea is that sometimes a speaker intends that her hearer grasp a particular implication without which the utterance would not be relevant. Such implicatures are called strong implicatures, in opposition to weak implicatures.

In the following exchange, Bill's utterance has a strong implicature:

Albert: Can you give me a hand with this work?

Bill: I've a huge amount of my own work to do today, and I promised the boss I'd give it priority.

If Albert does not understand that Bill is implicating that he cannot (or at least will not) help then he has missed the main point of Bill's utterance. This is a strong implicature, then, by definition.

See also: implicature, indeterminacy, poetic effects, weak implicature

### Structural ambiguity

One of two different types of ambiguity. Structural ambiguity occurs when a sequence of linguistic signs (sounds or written signs) corresponds to more than one syntactic structure, and those different structures encode different meanings. For example:

I decided to go shopping on Sunday.

This might mean that the decision took place on Sunday or that the shopping was to be on Sunday. In this example there are two possible locations in



the syntactic structure for the preposition phrase 'on Sunday.' Neither the pronunciation nor the written form make it certain whether 'on Sunday' is more closely associated with 'decided' or 'go shopping'.

See also: ambiguity, lexical ambiguity

## Synecdoche

A figure of speech in which an expression that denotes part of something is used to refer to the whole (e.g. 'mouth' in 'I've got six hungry mouths to feed'), or an expression denoting a whole is made to refer to a part of that whole (e.g. 'All of Scotland is up in arms over the poll tax' to mean that *people* in Scotland are).

Another form of synecdoche is using an expression denoting the material that something is made from to stand for that thing (e.g. 'willow' for cricket bat in such phrases as 'to wield the willow').

The term 'synecdoche' is sometimes also regarded as including the use of an expression denoting a smaller class to refer to a larger class, and for the converse situation. This is a very broad definition since it would include within synecdoche obvious metaphors such as 'that animal' for 'that man'.

Many cases of polysemy are regarded as related through synecdoche. One example is the two senses of 'chicken': the type of bird, and the meat.

## Syntax

In its most general sense, the term 'syntax' means the structure of a symbolic system. In linguistics, syntax is the structure of language, or the principles that determine that structure, or again, the study of the structure of language. The term is used in a narrow and a broad sense. In its narrow use, syntax refers to only those aspects of linguistic structure that pertain to the arrangement of words in phrases and sentences. In its broader use, syntax covers all aspects of linguistic structure, including phonological (sound) structure as well as sentence structure. 'Syntax' is a near synonym of 'grammar', which also has both the broad and the narrow meaning.

Taking pragmatics as the study of communication or of certain aspects of the use of language, it is a distinct area of study from syntax. On this view,

pragmatic theorists study the use of language, taking for granted that language has organizational principles of its own that do not necessarily serve its use or the intentions of a speaker. Speakers make use of various linguistic possibilities in order to convey their meaning, and they may sometimes bend the rules of grammar, but the rules of grammar are given, and do not depend on the intentions of speakers.

See also: semantics

## Tautology

A statement that expresses a proposition that is necessarily true is called a tautology. For example:

$$2 + 2 = 4$$

War is war.

If it rains, it rains.

Tautological utterances take various syntactic forms, including:

Equative: *a* is *a*; an *a* is an *a*

Conditional: If *P* then *P*

Disjunctive: Either *P* or not *P*

Tautologies present a puzzle for pragmatic theory. Since tautologies are necessarily true it is hard to see how uttering one can be informative, relevant or cooperative. Yet people do utter tautologies and are understood.

Tautological utterances can be analysed as violations of a maxim of quantity, leading, on the assumption that the speaker is nonetheless being cooperative, to implicatures that are informative (and non-tautological). An utterance of 'War is war' might implicate that terrible things inevitably happen in wartime. What is communicated by a tautology can vary widely, though. Not all utterances of tautologies convey inevitability:

Archie: Can I borrow your pen?

Brenda: Here you are. It's only a biro, though.

Archie: A pen is a pen.

Here the tautology is used to implicate that any pen, including Brenda's biro, will do for the task at hand, perhaps via another implicature that all (functioning) pens can be used for writing.

The challenge is to show how such disparate implicatures can be derived. One thing that all interpretations of tautological utterances might have in common is that they serve as reminders of facts already known: that war is terrible; that pens are writing instruments, etc.

See also: Cooperative Principle, conversational maxims

## Timeless meaning

In Grice's work on meaning and conversation, the meaning possessed by utterance-types abstracting away from context, in contrast to utterance meaning. This is similar to what linguists call *linguistic meaning* or *linguistically encoded meaning*.

Grice distinguished two levels of timeless meaning: (1) the timeless meaning of an utterance-type and (2) the timeless meaning of an *applied* utterance type. The first level is the level captured by 'x means ". . ." ' where x is a sentence or a gesture. The second level is characterized by 'x meant *p* here' where *p* is a proposition. Where there is ambiguity, the meanings at these levels differ.

'John went to the bank' has two timeless meanings, which can be glossed as: *John went to a certain kind of financial institution* and *John went to the side of a river*. On a particular occasion, the speaker will have in mind one of these meanings but not both (barring puns). Supposing that the financial institution was meant, then at the level of timeless meaning of an applied utterance type we have: Here, 'John went to the bank' meant *John went to a certain kind of financial institution*.

See also: linguistic meaning

## Topic and comment

In the study of information structure, it is usual to make a distinction between *topic* and *comment* (or *theme* and *rheme*). The topic is what is under discussion and the comment is what is said about it.

Topichood is often linguistically marked. Topic often, but not always, corresponds to the syntactic subject of a sentence. Passivization can be used to make the logical topic into the syntactic subject, as in:

John was kicked by Mary

Sentence topics may also be given distinctive intonation, fronted, or marked lexically or morphologically (as in Japanese and Korean). Here are some examples of topic-fronting:

John, Mary kicked.

It was John that Mary kicked.

As for John, Mary kicked him.

When there is a sequence of two sentences with the same topic, the topic is often linguistically reduced in the second sentence.

?? Mary went to London. Mary saw the queen.

Mary went to London. She saw the queen.

See also: information structure

## Truth conditions

When this term is used in pragmatics what is usually meant is the truth conditions *of an utterance*. The truth conditions are just what the phrase says: the conditions under which the utterance would be true. For example, if you utter the sentence, 'No one lives on the moon,' your utterance is true if (and only if) there is nobody living on the moon.

The idea is that if you know the truth-conditions of an utterance and you know how the world actually is, or at least whether it happens to conform to those conditions or not, then you know the truth value of the utterance: that is whether it is true or false.

The truth-conditions of an utterance depend only on the proposition it expresses, not on any implicatures that it has.

As well as utterances many other things can have truth-conditions: logical formulae, thoughts, possibly sentences and certainly propositions.

See also: implicature, non-truth-conditional meaning, proposition expressed

## Truth-functional

A truth-functional operator is one whose output depends only on the truth values of its inputs, and for which a given set of inputs always produces the same output. In formal semantics and logic, connectives may be truth-functional or non-truth-functional. The basic connectives of propositional logic are defined to be truth-functional, so that, for example, the truth of '*P* AND *Q*' depends only on the truth values of the propositions represented by *P* and *Q*: if *P* is true and *Q* is true then '*P* AND *Q*' is true; otherwise it is false.

Attention has been focused on whether sentential connectives in natural language are truth-functional. For example, is English 'and' truth-functional?

If it is, then the order of the sentences it conjoins should not affect the truth value of the compound sentence, and this seems correct for some sentences:

Clara lives in Oslo and Alice lives in London.

Alice lives in London and Clara lives in Oslo.

Some other well-known examples are less clear:

John and Mary got married and she became pregnant.

Mary became pregnant and John and Mary got married.

According to Grice, the complications of examples like these should be explained in the pragmatics, leaving the semantics of words like 'and' simple and truth-functional.

See also: implicature, modified Occam's razor

## Truth value

In logic and philosophy as well as semantics and pragmatics it is common to talk of the truth value of a proposition. Each proposition has a truth value: either *true* or *false* (in standard bivalent, that is two-valued, logic). For example, 'Lewis Carroll was in Oxford at 2 o'clock in the afternoon on 14th June 1889' might be true or false, depending on how the world was at that time.

In other types of logic there are more than two truth values (for example *true*, *false*, *possible*), or a truth value gap: that is in such systems, propositions may have no truth value at all. One motivation for such variation from the normal bivalent framework is presupposition failure.

See also: presupposition

## Turn

In Conversation Analysis, conversation is analysed as a sequences of turns, rather like a game such as chess. The term 'turn' is short for 'turn constructional unit', essentially an utterance: a meaningful component of a conversation, which might be a sentence, a phrase, a word or even a nod of the head or a conversationally encouraging noise like 'Mm-hm'.

Of course, turn-taking in conversation is more flexible than in chess. Turns can overlap, and while they sometimes alternate between speakers, it is also possible for a speaker to signal that she is going to continue, or even to nominate another speaker to take the next turn. The utterances or parts of utterances which do this sort of work are called 'turn allocational components'.

See also: Conversation Analysis

## Type-token distinction

A distinction from philosophy often used in pragmatics. Consider the letters in the word 'book'. How many are there? Four, or three? Both answers are correct. There are three letter types: *b*, *o* and *k*, but there are four letter tokens: one each of *b* and *k* and two of *o*.

Making the distinction helps keep things clear when discussing concepts, words, propositions, sentences and utterances, the everyday business of pragmatic theorists. For example, Grice distinguished between utterance-type occasion-meaning and utterance occasion-meaning.

Much of pragmatics is concerned with what is communicated by utterance-tokens: pragmatic theorists are interested in the proposition expressed and implicatures conveyed by uttering a particular phrase in a particular context. However, in Levinson's neo-Gricean theory some implicatures are a property of utterance types.

See also: utterance-type meaning

## Unarticulated constituent

A part of the proposition expressed by an utterance which does not correspond to any part of the linguistic material uttered. For example, an utterance of this sentence might convey the italicized proposition below:

I have been to their parties, but I haven't eaten anything.

*I have been to their parties, but I haven't eaten anything {there}*

The bracketed material seems to be an unarticulated constituent of the proposition expressed, since there is apparently nothing in the logical form of the sentence that demands that it be added.

Note that 'unarticulated' means something quite different from the term 'covert' in grammar, which means *unpronounced but present in the linguistic structure*. For a constituent to be unarticulated it must not correspond to anything at all in the linguistic structure, pronounced or unpronounced. Thus the claim that there are unarticulated constituents is equivalent to the claim that there is 'free' (i.e. purely pragmatic) enrichment. Therefore, theorists ('indexicalists') who claim that all pragmatic intrusion into the proposition expressed is by disambiguation or saturation of overt or hidden indexicals deny that there are unarticulated constituents.

See also: free enrichment, indexicalism

## Understatement

A figure of speech sometimes known as *meiosis*, in which a speaker expresses a stronger meaning than his words carry in themselves.

For example, *A* and *B* are in central London, and *A* announces his intention to walk to Greenwich. *B* might reply as follows:

B: It's quite a step from here. It'll take you some time.

There are two examples of understatement here: the journey is more than 'a step' and even the shortest journey takes 'some time'. *B*'s meaning is that the journey is long (by some standard) and will take considerable time.

See also: conversational maxims, figurative speech, hyperbole



## Uptake

In speech-act theory, the understanding of both the meaning (i.e. content) *and* the illocutionary force of an utterance. For example, if the hearer of an utterance of 'Could you pass the butter?' understands what the words mean, the compositional meaning of the sentence, which butter is referred to etc. *and* that the utterance was a request (rather than a question, say) then successful uptake has been achieved.

Successful uptake does not include acceptance of what is offered by the utterance. For example a hearer may understand 'A fiver says he won't make it' as a bet (and understand who 'he' is, and what the speaker claims he won't be able to do), but reject that bet. In that case, there is uptake but not ratification.

In Austin's work, uptake is a necessary condition for successful performance of an illocutionary act. In much subsequent work on speech acts, uptake is taken as a necessary and sufficient condition on successful performance of illocutionary acts.

See also: illocutionary force

## Utterance

Utterances and what they convey are at the centre of what pragmatics studies. In its narrowest sense, an utterance is a use of a particular bit of language in certain circumstances, by a particular speaker, on a particular occasion: that is, 'a pairing of a sentence and a context' in Bar-Hillel's famous phrase (although an utterance may be of a phrase or just a word rather than a sentence). This is close to the ordinary language use of the word 'utterance'. As a technical term in pragmatics, 'utterance' is usually used in a slightly broader sense to also cover non-linguistic gestures used to communicate.

In Grice's work, utterances can be taken as those things which possess speaker meaning; thus the definition of speaker meaning in terms of several levels of speaker intentions also defines utterances.

In relevance theory utterances are seen as ostensive-inferential stimuli, that is bits of behaviour that are intended to be noticed, are intended to convey assumptions and are intended to be seen as intended to convey assumptions.

The terms 'speech act' and 'utterance' are sometimes used interchangeably, although utterances need not involve language.

See also: locutionary act, sentence

## Utterance-type meaning

On one conception, this is the meaning that is conveyed by utterances that are identical except that they are uttered on different occasions by different speakers, that is, meaning that is conveyed by all tokens of one utterance type (other things being equal).

It is controversial whether there is any theoretical need for utterance-type meaning. Many theorists view the distinction between sentence(-type) meaning and utterance-token meaning as exhaustive.

In Grice's theory of conversation, a distinction is made between generalized and particularized conversational implicatures. In Levinson's neo-Gricean theory, while particularized implicatures are conveyed by utterance-tokens, generalized implicatures are seen as properties of the utterance type. For example an indirect answer to a question will be a particularised conversational implicature, whereas for Levinson the scalar implicature from 'some' to 'not all' is a generalised implicature, always carried by a particular form of words, except in special circumstances.

See also: generalized conversational implicature

## Utterance-type occasion-meaning

The meaning that a speaker intended the sentence she uttered, or some part of it, to have on a particular occasion. It is one of four levels of meaning associated with an utterance in Grice's work. Grice distinguished between timeless meaning (roughly: linguistically encoded meaning) and utterance or speaker meaning. Within utterance meaning he made a further distinction between utterer's occasion-meaning and utterance-type occasion-meaning. Utterance-type occasion-meaning is characterized by '*U* meant by *x* "*p*"', where *U* is the utterer and *x* is a phrase or gesture. In contrast, utterance occasion-meaning is what the utterance meant (or what the speaker meant by the utterance): *U* meant by uttering *x* that . . .

See also: speaker meaning

## Vagueness

A vague meaning is one that is not clearly defined. Much attention has focused on vague predicates. For example, it has been argued that the predicate *bald* is vague. If someone says 'John is bald' we may not know whether the proposition expressed by the utterance is true or false, even though we know all the relevant facts. If he has no hair then he is bald. If the top part of his head is thickly covered with hair he is not. But there are some intermediate states of sparse coverage for which we might not be sure whether it is correct to say that he is bald.

This is not a problem of perceptual uncertainty: we might count the hairs on John's head and map the area they cover and still be unsure whether the predicate *bald* genuinely applies. That is why this is considered to be an example of vagueness. Many other predicates might also be vague. Consider *red*, *tall*, *fast*, *early*.

For some of these terms, a pragmatic explanation might be given. Suppose that 'bald' has a precise strict and literal meaning: *has no hair*. Then describing someone with a few hairs as bald is an example of loose use. On this account the vagueness is not in the meaning of the word (semantics) but in the meaning conveyed by the speaker in using it (pragmatics).

See also: indeterminacy, loose use, Modified Occam's Razor, sorites paradox

## Verdictive

In Austin's classification of speech acts, verdictives are the class of speech acts concerned with giving a judgment or pronouncing a verdict. Examples include the foreman of a jury pronouncing the defendant guilty ('We find him guilty as charged, m'lud'), an umpire in cricket ruling that a batsman is out ('Out!'), and the judge of a dog show announcing the winner ('Fido is best of breed, spaniels, 2009'). Verdictives are close to Austin's original conception of performatives: speech acts which change the world rather than describing it, although not all utterances that are clearly performative are verdictives: naming a ship would be an exercitive, and promising would be a commissive in Austin's classification.

Verdictive acts are also one type of illocutionary act in Bach and Harnish's taxonomy of speech acts. Verdictives make a judgment official. Bach and Harnish distinguish them from effectives, which simply create or change facts.

See also: behabitive, commissive, effective, exercitive, expositive, speech acts

## Weak communication

In relevance theory, communication is seen as making certain assumptions more manifest. Since manifestness is a matter of degree, assumptions may be communicated more or less strongly.

Relevance theory claims that communication may be strong or weak, where the more certain it is that something has been communicated by a particular utterance, the stronger the communication involved, with a gradient of cases between strong and weak communication. Both explicatures and implicatures may be communicated strongly or weakly.

Poetic effects are explained as the weak communication of a number of related assumptions.

See also: weak implicature

## Weak implicature

In relevance theory, an implicature (i.e., a communicated implication of an utterance) which is not by itself the main communicative point of the utterance. The idea is that for some utterances a hearer can understand what a speaker is trying to communicate even if he fails to get one or more implicatures. Such implicatures are called weak implicatures, in contrast to strong implicatures, and it is postulated that there is a gradient of cases between strong and weak.

For example:

John: What are you planning to do today?

Mary: I'm tired.

There is no single implicature which the hearer must take Mary to be communicating in order to understand her utterance here. Instead there are several assumptions that he might supply as an implicated premise, each of which would lead to a different implicature, along the following lines:

Implicated premise: If Mary is tired to degree  $x$  she doesn't want to go out.

Explicature: Mary is tired to degree  $x$ .

Implicated conclusion: Mary doesn't want to go out.

See also: implicature, indeterminacy, poetic effects, strong implicature

## What is said

A semi-technical term for the explicit, propositional content of an utterance, *what is said* stands in contrast to *what is implicated*. In Grice's famous example of a letter of reference for a job in philosophy, what is said is that the applicant is well-turned out, polite, spells well etc. What is implicated is that he is no good for the job (since the speaker lists no qualities more relevant to the situation than politeness, good spelling etc., and it can be inferred that the speaker wishes to communicate that the applicant does not have them).

Since the term *what is said* was introduced by Grice alongside his coinage of the term implicature, with the aim of capturing the intuition that speakers can mean by utterances much more than what their words mean, then, by definition, what is said must be close to the linguistic meaning of the sentence, built up from the linguistically encoded meanings of the words uttered.

Grice also saw what is said as propositional. It is what is asserted by the speaker in making the utterance (for assertive uses of declarative sentences, at least). This means that reference must be assigned to indexicals, and ambiguous expressions must be disambiguated in order to determine what is said. For example, for an utterance of 'He went to the bank', the intended referent of the word 'he' must be found and 'bank' must be understood in the intended sense. One reason is that in Grice's theory of conversation, the failure of what is said to conform to one or more of the conversational maxims is what triggers the search for an implicature or implicatures that maintain the presumption that the speaker is being cooperative. For the question to arise of whether what is said is informative, truthful etc. it must be propositional.

There is a tension between the two properties of what is said: that it is what is asserted by the speaker and that it is close to the meaning of the words uttered (taking into account how they are put together in the sentence uttered, of course). Grice's account of figurative speech exposes this tension. For example, an ironic utterance of 'It's lovely weather for the time of year' is analysed as a blatant falsehood, a violation of the first maxim of quality, 'Do not say what you believe to be false,' and on the assumption that the cooperative principle holds, a related implicature is derived: perhaps 'It's horrible weather for the time of year.' Thus the overall contribution made by the speaker is true (as the supermaxim of quality demands). The problem is

that in irony, what is said according to the meanings of the words used and what is said in terms of what it is that the speaker has asserted come apart. According to the theory, the speaker did not assert that the weather is lovely; she implicated the opposite. Grice ultimately suggested that in irony nothing is said: rather the speaker 'makes as if to say' something. On this conception, what is said must be asserted in making an utterance; if nothing has been asserted, then nothing has actually been said.

The standard definition of what is said, then, is that it is propositional, namely it is the proposition arrived at by starting from the words uttered and assigning reference and disambiguating as necessary, with the proviso that in some figurative speech no proposition is asserted, so nothing is actually said.

The tension between the two demands on what is said is sharper in cases where a proposition is asserted, but which, intuitively, is not the one that would be reached by taking the words uttered, disambiguating and assigning reference. One such case is Grice's example of an utterance of 'I've broken a finger. Suppose the speaker is John. Then according to Grice what John has said is: There is a finger such that John has broken it (i.e. the finger might be John's or it might be someone else's). Grice says that it is implicated (but not said) that the finger is John's. A common intuition about this example, though, is that John has asserted that he broke his own finger. When the two criteria for what is said pull in different directions, which takes priority?

Many other examples make this point. For example:

A: Would you like to have dinner with us now?

B: No thanks. I've eaten.

Intuitively, what B has asserted in uttering 'I've eaten' goes beyond the linguistically encoded meanings of the words. She has asserted that she has eaten dinner that evening (or at least that she has eaten enough food recently enough to not want to eat now). It is hard to see how the standard view of what is said relates to communication for such examples. It is implausible that either speaker or hearer would entertain the proposition that B has eaten (full stop), that is that she has eaten something at some point before the present moment.

Because of these problems, the notion of what is said has been developed in two different ways, while other theorists have abandoned the term. One

way of developing the concept is to insist that the elements of what is said must correspond to the elements in the sentence, and to give up the idea that what is said is always (in non-figurative cases) communicated. This is Kent Bach's conception of what is said. It is more minimal than the Gricean conception in that according to Bach, what is said need not be propositional. In cases such as an utterance by John of 'I am tall,' what is said is that John is tall, which is not a full proposition, but a propositional radical. Pragmatic completion is required to reach the proposition asserted, which might be: John is tall for a ten-year-old boy. In some other cases, including an utterance of 'I've eaten,' what is said is propositional, but it is still not the proposition asserted. This is reached by pragmatic saturation. Since it is not generally the case on this conception of what is said that what is said is communicated, it is possible to give up the distinction between saying and making as if to say. What is said in ironic and other figurative utterances, on this theory, is just what the words say (given reference assignment and disambiguation).

The converse view of what is said is taken by the philosophers Charles Travis and François Recanati. They prefer to keep the criterion that what is said must be the proposition asserted by the speaker, giving up the criterion that what is said stays as close as possible to the encoded meanings of the words uttered. According to Recanati, the intuitions of speakers about what is said access the asserted content of sentences. However, experimental work has shown that intuitions are mixed, particularly in the theoretically controversial cases. Like Grice, most people feel the pull both of the idea that what a speaker says is (nearly) determined by their words, and of the idea that what a speaker has said is what it is that she has asserted. What is more, in cases where an implicature is the main point of an utterance (for example in indirect answers to questions) some have the intuition that that main point is what was said. Equally, one can report a speech or presentation by giving the gist in words that the speaker may never have used: for example 'In the budget, the chancellor said that he was going to raise taxes on everything enjoyable.'

Because of the tension in the notion of what is said, and the fact that it is a term about which there are conflicting intuitions, in relevance theory the term is abandoned in favour of the fully technical terms *explicature* and *the proposition expressed*.

See also: explicature, implicature, implicature, proposition expressed



# Key Thinkers

## John Langshaw Austin

J. L. Austin (1911–1960) was an English philosopher, famous as the central figure in the ordinary-language school of philosophy. His book, 'How to Do Things with Words', directed attention to actions that can be performed with language apart from making statements, and effectively founded speech act theory, which has been hugely influential in pragmatics.

Austin was born in Lancaster and educated at Shrewsbury School, a private school in Shropshire. After taking an undergraduate degree in classics at Balliol College, he spent his working life at Oxford, except for a period during the second world war when he was in MI6, a branch of British military intelligence.

Austin died in 1960 aged only 49, and almost all of his more influential works were published posthumously, including the books 'Sense and Sensibilia', edited by Geoffrey Warnock, and 'How to Do Things with Words', edited by J. O. Urmson; Austin's collected philosophical papers, edited by both; and the paper 'Three ways of spilling ink'. As these titles suggest, Austin's writing is dryly witty. It is also concise, despite his exhaustive interest in the fine distinctions of ordinary language use.

In the period between the Second World War and his early death in 1960, Austin was at the centre of a group of Oxford philosophers including Warnock, Urmson, Paul Grice, Peter Strawson and Stuart Hampshire who met on Saturday mornings to discuss various topics and papers chosen by Austin and even, on occasion, to design and play games. These meetings went at Austin's pace, that is, slowly and meticulously; they might get through one paper per academic term. The participants spent much of their time on 'linguistic botanizing', collecting words and expressions related to a subject of philosophical interest and discussing these expressions in great detail in an attempt to find out what distinctions they mark. Much later, Grice said that the group once spent five weeks trying to work out (without success) why

'highly' can be substituted for 'very' in some expressions such as 'very unusual', but not in others such as 'very depressed'.

The procedure of 'going through the dictionary' in search of philosophically important distinctions was one aspect of Austin's resolve 'to proceed from "ordinary language", that is, by examining what we should say when, and so why and what we should mean by it,' as he put it in his paper 'A plea for excuses', a kind of manifesto for his way of doing things. He gave three justifications for this approach. First, words are the tools of philosophy; it is important to know how to use them. Secondly, it is necessary to see that words are distinct from the facts and things they are used to talk about, and they may misrepresent them or give a partial view. The third justification is that 'our common stock of words embodies all the distinctions men have found worth drawing, and the connexions they have found worth marking, in the lifetimes of many generations.'

With his concern to understand ordinary language use, Austin was interested in what sort of thing *saying* is. He diagnosed other philosophers as having a comforting background belief that making an action must in the end come down to making a bodily movement. On this view saying would come down to certain movements of the tongue. Austin wanted to pursue a more sophisticated notion of actions, so that one piece of bodily movement might be several actions or one action 'under different descriptions' as later philosophers were to put it. For example, in rotating my right hand clockwise I might be turning a key, starting my car and (inadvertently) setting off a car bomb.

Speech act theory applies this approach to utterances, or speech acts, as Austin called them. He distinguishes between the locutionary act, the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act performed by a speaker. The locutionary act is itself analysed into three components: roughly, the act of making (linguistic) sounds, the act of producing a certain sentence and the act of expressing a certain proposition. The illocutionary act is concerned with the function of the utterance: was it a warning, a promise, an assertion or a question, for example? The perlocutionary act is to do with the effect that the utterance has on the hearer. For example, consider an utterance of the sentence, 'I will return your car in perfect condition,' made by John to Mary. At the locutionary level this involves making certain sounds which constitute a sentence with a certain structure, and which on this occasion expresses a certain proposition: that John will return Mary's car in perfect condition. At the illocutionary level, John might be making a promise (to return the

car etc.), and at the perlocutionary level he might be trying to get Mary to lend him the car.

What has been most influential here is the idea that the illocutionary force of an utterance can be thought of separately from its linguistic and its truth-conditional meaning. A great deal of subsequent work has been done on illocutionary force. One strand of work is interested in putting different illocutionary forces into groups: Austin proposed five types. John Searle's slightly different taxonomy has been more influential. A second strand is the question of whether the type of sentence uttered determines the illocutionary force of the utterance, or perhaps a range of potential illocutionary forces. It is now generally thought that the force of an utterance must be pragmatically inferred.

Austin had shown that some distinctions in illocutionary force could not be read off the surface structure of sentences. As a step towards his preferred view that all speech acts may have locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary aspects, he had entertained the idea that sentences (or utterances) might divide into two types, constative and performative. Constatives would be assertions and statements, typically the focus of philosophy of language. They are propositional, that is, they have truth conditions. Performatives would be utterances which change facts rather than describing them. Typical examples would include the promise above, 'I do' said during a wedding ceremony and an umpire's judgement 'Out!' Performatives would have felicity conditions rather than truth conditions: for a performative to come off correctly, the correct words must be said, at the right time, by the right (type of) person and, in many cases, the speaker has to be sincere.

Finding no systematic syntactic distinction between the two, Austin abandoned the putative distinction between performatives and constatives. He examined several tests, none of which reliably discriminates. A decisive consideration is that the same form of words can be used as a performative or a constative, depending on intention and context. For example:

Can I borrow your car? I promise to return it in perfect condition.  
(*performative*)

Peter: How do you get Mary to lend you her car?

John: I promise to return it in perfect condition. (*constative*)

Austin preferred to see all utterances as performative, including such apparent constatives as assertions and statements. This made sense of the

fact that inserting the word 'hereby', which sometimes seems to pick out performatives (e.g. 'I hereby promise to return your car' cannot have a constative sense) is also felicitous in examples such as 'I hereby state/assert that  $\pi$  is greater than 3.'

If the force of an utterance is not determined by its linguistic structure, just as actions are not merely physical bodily movements, the question arises what else comes in to determine the type of action performed. Austin considered both (the speaker's) intentions and (social) conventions as possible candidates. In his discussion of performatives, he seems to have been more attracted to the idea that conventions are what decide the illocutionary force of an utterance. He had in mind speech acts which are embedded in fixed social routines, such as the example he gives, naming a ship. The felicity conditions for acts like this (similar acts include taking marriage vows and finding a defendant guilty) refer to social conventions, and these acts have effects on social conventions: after the speech act is successfully performed it is conventional to refer to the ship by the name it has been given, for example.

Austin's choice here marks a considerable difference from the Gricean notion of speaker meaning, which is based on intention. It is not surprising that this aspect of Austin's work on speech acts has appealed more to pragmatic theorists interested in broader questions of language use and society than to Griceans. Nonetheless, the concept of illocutionary force is also important to pragmatic theories based on Grice's work, where it is seen as something that the speaker intended to convey, along with the proposition expressed and implicatures.

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## Kent Bach

Kent Bach is an American philosopher, professor at San Francisco State University, and one of the leading Gricean pragmatic theorists. His work with the philosopher and linguist Robert Harnish is the best-known attempt at reconciling speech act theory with a Gricean view of communication and speaker meaning. While Bach's view of pragmatics is similar to Grice's in most respects, he has argued for two major modifications: the introduction of *implicitures* and the elimination of conventional implicatures.

Bach's undergraduate degree is from Harvard. After that he studied at the University of California, Berkeley, receiving his Ph.D. in 1968. Paul Grice had moved to Berkeley in 1967, and Bach reports having read Grice's 'Logic and Conversation' in mimeograph that year, soon after Grice had delivered it as the William James lectures at Harvard. He writes that he has 'thought, read, and written about implicature off and on ever since.'

Bach and Harnish endorse Peter Strawson's criticism of Austin's work on speech acts. For Austin, speech acts were largely a matter of convention. For example, for a speaker to succeed in naming a ship she must meet certain criteria: she has to be the correct person, say the right words at the right time in the right way, and so on. These are social conventions.

According to Strawson, Austin was too impressed by these 'institutional' cases. For other speech acts such as telling, requesting and asking, there are no institutional conventions. Strawson claims that in making an institutional speech act the speaker intends to conform to the relevant convention, but in the non-institutional cases the speaker intends to communicate something to a hearer.

Bach and Harnish attempt a Gricean account of communicative speech acts. In particular they want to explain how the illocutionary force intended by the speaker is inferred by the hearer. The force has to be inferred because many speech acts are 'indirect': that is to say, the sentence uttered is not linguistically explicit about the illocutionary force. A speaker can promise explicitly. For example:

Mary: I promise that John will paint your house.

A speaker could make the same promise without using the verb 'promise':

Mary: John will paint your house.

Here, the hearer must infer the intended illocutionary force because while this sentence can be used to promise, the very same words could be used to make a threat or a prediction, or even to give an order.

In Bach and Harnish's system there are four major categories of communicative speech acts: constatives, directives, commissives and acknowledgments, exemplified respectively by statements, orders, promises and apologies. These categories differ in the attitude expressed by the speaker, and Bach and Harnish propose a detailed taxonomy of speech acts according to the type of attitude they express and, in some cases, constraints that they impose on propositional content.

According to Bach and Harnish, in working out what attitude the speaker is expressing the hearer works out what type of speech act the speaker is making. Thus there is no need to invoke the idea of convention.

In the general outline of how speakers recognize illocutionary attitudes, Bach and Harnish's account is essentially Gricean. They adopt a reflexive version of Grice's definition of speaker meaning in terms of intentions. According to this conception, for a speaker to express an attitude is for the speaker to reflexively intend that the hearer takes the utterance as reason to think that the speaker has that attitude.

In Bach and Harnish's system, communication relies on three presumptions: the Communicative Presumption, the Presumption of Literalness and the Linguistic Presumption. These details have been criticized. The Presumption of Literalness is that an utterance should be understood literally unless it must be taken non-literally. Critics have claimed that this is a stronger presumption than Grice makes in his quality maxims, and that it makes false predictions.

The Linguistic Presumption, that is, the assumption that speaker and hearer share a language, *L*, might also be too strong. Intuitively, it appears that a hearer does not need to speak or even to fully understand the speaker's language to work out what she meant. Many linguists would say that strictly speaking each native speaker has her own unique *I*-language, different in subtle ways from other speakers of the same *E*-language (e.g. English or Chinese).

More fundamental criticism of the general project of Gricean accounts of speech acts in communication is due to Sperber and Wilson. They say that there is no evidence that most non-institutional speech acts are communicated. They think that the illocutionary force of assertions, warnings, denials,

threats and many other speech acts is not part of what the speaker wants the hearer to recognize, but a merely theoretical classification. Criticisms of this type do not deny the possibility of a Gricean account of speech act uptake, but cast doubt on its scope.

In Bach's more recent work on pragmatics he has argued for two modifications to Gricean accounts of communication. In his paper, 'The myth of conventional implicatures', Bach argues that Grice was wrong to suggest that certain linguistic expressions conventionally implicate. According to Bach, expressions that have been thought to give rise to conventional implicatures should be split into two groups.

The first group includes connectives like 'but' and 'still'. Bach suggests that utterances of sentences containing these connectives express more than one proposition. For example, 'Mary is poor but honest' expresses the propositions (1) that Mary is poor and Mary is honest and (2) that being poor precludes being honest.

According to Bach, adverbials such as 'frankly' and 'after all' are utterance modifiers. They contribute second-order speech acts, commenting on the utterance. Thus, 'Frankly, the provost is deranged,' does two things: (1) it expresses the proposition that the provost is deranged and (2) it comments on the utterance, saying that it is frank.

One motivation given by Bach for his division of these expressions into two types is that they behave differently in reported speech in his opinion. Connectives like 'but' can be reported verbatim in indirect speech, but, according to Bach, utterance-modifying adverbials like 'frankly' cannot (although other speakers have different intuitions here):

John said that Mary was poor but honest.

John said that (?? frankly) the provost is deranged.

Bach takes this as evidence that 'but' and the like contribute to what is said, whereas 'frankly' and similar expressions do not.

Bach's view of what is said motivates another modification to the Gricean view of communication. Grice said that his notion of what is said is intended to be 'close to the conventional meaning of the words uttered' and Bach proposes a strict version of this: that the components of what is said must correspond to constituents of the sentence uttered. However, Bach also agrees with the linguistic underdeterminacy thesis, that the proposition

expressed by an utterance typically goes well beyond the linguistic meaning. Therefore he thinks that there is a level distinct both from what is said and from conversational implicature, which is derived from what is said by pragmatic inference.

There are at least three ways, according to Bach, in which the linguistic meaning of the sentence uttered may fall short of the proposition expressed in uttering it. First, there is indexicality and ambiguity. Still, even granting that reference assignment and resolution of ambiguities have been carried out, the result (*what is said* in Bach's sense) will often fall short of the proposition expressed.

On Bach's view, there are cases where (even after reference assignment and disambiguation) there is no proposition expressed, and this must be inferentially completed. For example, the sentence 'Jack is ready' does not encode a proposition, although on a particular occasion of use, the speaker will (normally) intend to express a proposition: perhaps that Jack is ready for his first parachute jump. Bach proposes that what is encoded by the sentence in such cases is a *propositional radical*. Bach's term for the addition of material to the propositional radical to reach a proposition is 'completion'.

In other cases, what is said is a full proposition, but not the one that the speaker intended to express, as for example with typical utterances of 'I'll be home later.' The sentence itself (after assignment of reference to 'I') expresses the proposition that (e.g.) John will be home at a time after the present time. This is what Bach calls the *minimal proposition* (borrowing this label from François Recanati). But the proposition expressed is likely to be that John will be home later *that day*. Bach's term for addition of material to a minimal proposition is 'expansion'.

Since in Bach's view expansion and completion both concern something that is *implicit in* what is said, he calls this level implicature.

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## Noam Avram Chomsky

Noam Chomsky is the founder of modern linguistics, and without having worked in pragmatics he is one of the thinkers who has had the most influence on the field. Chomsky's focus on an innate, universal language faculty in humans has defined the study of language since his ideas began to spread in the early 1960s. There are many linguists who agree with Chomsky on this key point and some who disagree strongly, but few who are indifferent. The successes of this programme also helped to start a cognitive revolution in psychology and philosophy of mind. Cognitive accounts of pragmatics are one result of this revolution.

Chomsky has also written on questions in the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of language, and his views on meaning in particular are of direct relevance to pragmatics. He has said that there is no such thing as semantics, only syntax and pragmatics, and has been taken to suggest that a theory of language use is an impossibility since it would have to be a theory of everything.

Chomsky was born in 1928. From the age of two, he attended Oak Lane Country Day School, a progressive school in Philadelphia. After ten years there he went to an ordinary high school where he was shocked by the stress on competition between students. Chomsky studied philosophy and linguistics at the University of Pennsylvania, receiving his BA in 1949 and MA in 1951. That same year he became a member of the Society of Fellows at Harvard. He received his Ph.D. from Pennsylvania in 1955 and moved to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he has worked ever since and is now an emeritus professor.

As famous as Chomsky's work in linguistics and philosophy is, he is at least as well known for his political work. Since the 1960s, when he became involved in protests against the American war in Vietnam, he has been a leading critic of US foreign policy, a subject on which he has published numerous books and articles. His political activities started young: at the age of ten he wrote an article for his school newspaper on the fall of Barcelona in the Spanish civil war. He describes himself as an anarchist or libertarian socialist, influenced by the anarchosyndicalist Rudolf Rocker but also by enlightenment liberalism: he has a portrait of the philosopher and political activist Bertrand Russell in his study at MIT.

The foundation of Chomsky's view of language is that the faculty of language is a biological endowment of the human species and that the central principles of grammar are universal across the species. More specifically, what is innate and possessed by all (normally developing) human beings, according to this theory, is a language acquisition device. This device is the initial state of the language faculty. Exposure to conspecifics' use of language in childhood triggers and shapes this language organ until it attains an adult grammar. Certain aspects of this adult grammar are innately specified principles, while other aspects are parameters that are innately specified but set by experience. It is the existence of a language organ in human infants but not in (e.g.) kittens or baby monkeys that explains why humans, but not cats or monkeys, acquire language.

A second fundamental of Chomskyan linguistics is a distinction between *competence*, what is (unconsciously) known about language, and *performance*, what is done with that knowledge. This distinction allows linguists to focus on the properties of the grammatical system, abstracting away from how it is used.

Principles shared by all languages are taken to be aspects of Universal Grammar, innately specified. For example, natural language is recursive in the sense that it allows a phrase to be embedded in another phrase with no principled limit on the depth of embedding, for example:

John ate the rice.

Mary thought that John ate the rice.

Bill suspected that Mary thought that John ate the rice.

etc.

The cat with black fur.

The cat with a toy with black fur.

etc.

All languages also have structural dependencies between elements within sentences. There are structural limitations on which words can be linked, so, in these examples from Neil Smith's excellent book on Chomsky's thought, 'John' and 'him' cannot refer to the same person in the first sentence, whereas in the second sentence they can:

John expects to visit him.

I wonder who John expects to visit him.

Most of Chomsky's work within linguistics is directed towards understanding the organizing principles of grammar which underlie such facts, with an emphasis on explaining rather than simply cataloguing and describing. Within this field of generative grammar, which he founded, Chomsky remains a pre-eminent figure.

This work on the nature and acquisition of grammar has to be supplemented with an account of the acquisition of individual lexical items, such as the word 'cat', which somehow links the speech sounds /kæt/ to a certain concept. Here too, Chomsky thinks that there are strong innate constraints on what can be acquired, both in the case of speech sounds and in the acquisition of concepts.

On Chomsky's view, the study of meanings of words, linguistic semantics, is part of the overall programme of study of the mind-internal structures that constitute knowledge of language. Chomsky is sceptical about referential semantics, the philosophical view that linguistic items or concepts denote external objects. In Chomsky's view, referring is something that people, not words, do. Chomsky argues that it is not necessary or useful to talk about the stable referents of linguistic expressions abstracted away from their use, since the conceptions that people have of objects cannot be separated from the objects to which they want to refer. Echoing Gottlob Frege, Chomsky thinks that we always refer to objects under a description, or on a certain conception.

It is in this context that his remark should be understood that there is only syntax and pragmatics, and no semantics. By 'semantics' Chomsky means foundational, referential semantics. The term 'syntax' is used here in a broad sense, to mean the principles of the (internal) language system, and 'pragmatics' is also meant broadly as a term for the principles governing the many uses of language: in communication, of course, but also in maintaining personal relations, telling stories and in internal thought: 'statistically by far the most prevalent use [of language]' according to Chomsky.

Given a conception of having or knowing a language as a cognitive state, Chomsky says that three fundamental questions arise. The first is Humboldt's problem: 'what constitutes knowledge of language?' The second is the question of how such knowledge is acquired, Plato's problem. The third question is how such knowledge is put to use. This is Descartes' problem.

Chomsky describes Descartes' view of language use, which he shares, as follows: 'normal human speech is unbounded, free of stimulus control, coherent and appropriate, evoking thoughts that the listener might have expressed

in the same way – what we might call ‘the creative aspect of language use.’” This creative aspect of language use resists systematic investigation, according to Chomsky, and is bound up with questions about free will, a mystery which may have no solution comprehensible to human beings. It may be impossible to find scientific, that is, causal explanations for the coherence and appropriacy of human speech, and human action in general, since ‘There is little reason to suppose that human behaviour is caused, in any sense of the word we understand.’

Some have drawn the conclusion that Chomsky thinks that pragmatics, systematic study of the use of language, is pointless or impossible. Another interpretation of Chomsky’s views on the subject, advanced by the pragmatic theorist Asa Kasher, is that pragmatic principles – that is principles of appropriate use – are part of the knowledge of language: linguistic competence. Then these principles could be fruitfully investigated, even though the purposes of language users cannot.

A different but related interpretation is that the ‘problem of language use’ should be broken into two parts, both of which are aspects of performance, not competence. There is the question of what a speaker might want to communicate in a particular situation. This is the ‘creative aspect of language use’, bound up with questions about free will, and apparently intractable. There is also a group of questions about a speaker’s reasons for producing a particular utterance to convey a given intended meaning in a certain situation, and the inferences a hearer will make about intended meaning, given an utterance.

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## Herbert Paul Grice

Paul Grice (1913–1988) (he preferred to use his middle name rather than ‘Herbert’, his father’s name) was a British philosopher who was at Oxford from the 1930s to the late 1960s and at the University of California in Berkeley from then until the end of his life.

Of all thinkers – linguists and philosophers – it is Grice who has had the greatest influence on the development of pragmatics (a word that he did not use, however). Two connected parts of Grice’s work have been profoundly influential in the field: his theory of meaning and his theory of conversation.

Grice grew up in Birmingham and was educated at Clifton College, a private school in Bristol. He received his university education in the 1930s at Oxford, first as an undergraduate in classics at Corpus Christi College, then as a postgraduate at Merton College. Many years later, Grice paid tribute to his tutor at Corpus Christie, W. F. R. Hardie, saying that he learned from him ‘just about all the things which one can be taught by someone else, as distinct from the things which one has to teach oneself’. He credited Hardie with teaching him how to argue, saying, ‘I came to learn that the ability to argue is a skill involving many aspects, and is much more than an ability to see logical connections (although this ability is by no means to be despised).’

In 1938 Grice was appointed to a lectureship at St. John’s College, and was elected full fellow the following year. From 1940 Grice served in the navy and in naval intelligence, returning to his position at St. John’s at the end of the war and staying there until he moved to California in 1967.

Both Grice’s theory of meaning and his theory of conversation were developed during his time at Oxford. During this period Grice associated closely with a number of other philosophers including R. M. Hare, Stuart Hampshire and Peter Strawson. The *de facto* leader of this group was J. L. Austin, famous for his insistence on close examination of everyday language, and this school of thought became known as ordinary language philosophy. Grice was a member of the Saturday-morning discussion group that Austin led and which Grice called the ‘Playgroup’ (but not in front of Austin). A number of ideas that are now taken for granted in pragmatics were ‘in the air’ among these philosophers, and it is sometimes difficult to work out which ideas came from

which of them, since most of them published joint work or gave lecture series together. Certainly Austin and Grice shared an interest in the use of language and both saw utterances as actions, but they developed these ideas in quite different directions.

Grice's ideas sometimes appeared to the outside world first in other people's work since he did not often publish, being notoriously reluctant to submit papers to journals. His first paper on language and language use, 'Meaning', was originally written in 1948 to be presented at a meeting of the Oxford Philosophical Society. Strawson, who had been Grice's student, tried to get Grice to submit the paper to a journal, but failed. Grice would not make revisions to the paper; instead he gave it to Strawson and he and his wife edited it and sent it off to be published, which it finally was in 1957. Grice's distinction between natural and nonnatural meaning and his definition of speaker meaning first appeared in this paper.

Grice introduces his distinction between natural and nonnatural meaning by way of a bit of 'linguistic botanizing' (as he later described this characteristic move of the ordinary language style). He notes that the words 'mean' and 'meaning' can be used in different ways. One way is exemplified by expressions such as 'Those spots mean measles.' Grice calls this natural meaning. The other use he finds in expressions such as 'Those three rings on the bell mean that the bus is full.' This is nonnatural meaning. Grice saw his distinction as an improvement on the distinction between 'natural' and 'conventional' signs made by the philosopher Charles Pierce among others. One reason is that nonnatural meaning can be conveyed by an action with no conventional meaning: for example, miming the act of eating to communicate that you are hungry. The implied distinction between what a speaker means and what if anything is conventionally meant by her words or actions was to become the focus of Grice's theory of conversation and, as a result, of much of pragmatics.

The immediate import of distinguishing nonnatural from natural meaning was that it cleared the way for a definition of nonnatural meaning, or more precisely, what a speaker nonnaturally means by an utterance. Grice's definition of speaker meaning is that 'The speaker, *S*, (nonnaturally) meant something by *x*' is roughly equivalent to '*S* intended the utterance of *x* to produce some effect in the audience by means of the recognition of this intention.' Grice later called this intention to mean something an

M-intention. It is a complex intention which can be analysed as composed of three intentions:

- (i) *S* intends *S*'s utterance of *x* to produce a certain response *r* in a certain audience, *A*.
- (ii) *S* intends *A* to recognize *S*'s intention (i).
- (iii) *S* intends *A*'s recognition of *S*'s intention (i) to function as at least part of *A*'s reason for *A*'s response *r*.

In philosophical terms, Grice's theory of meaning is 'modest' (or 'translational') in that it relies on there being thoughts with meaning ('content') and does not analyse what it is for those thoughts to have content.

For Grice, his definition of speaker meaning in terms of speaker intentions was intended as a step towards understanding the timeless (i.e. linguistically encoded) meanings of words and sentences in terms of speaker intentions. Many philosophers and linguists have found this aim problematic: one serious problem is that it is unclear how the productivity and systematicity of linguistic meaning fits with this theory. The meanings of phrases and sentences depend in predictable ways on the meanings of the words that they are composed of. Grice's suggestion (in a later paper, 'Meaning revisited') that a certain word or gesture might come to have a certain meaning because it was used many times with a certain M-intention is hard to apply to sentence meaning. There is an indefinitely large number of sentences, most of which have never been used before, and speakers and hearers have no trouble using and understanding novel sentences.

A different kind of problem for Grice's theory of speaker meaning is that the three intentions listed above may not be necessary or (jointly) sufficient for cases of meaning. Strawson outlined counterexamples to the sufficiency of the definition, cases in which someone performs an action with all three intentions, but which intuitively would not count as cases of meaning because there might be something sneaky about the speaker's intentions. The philosopher Stephen Schiffer pushed the argument further, showing that adding more intentions to the definition to rule out 'sneaky' intentions would fail because examples can be constructed in which the sneakiness is at a higher level.

For these reasons, what is generally accepted in pragmatics of Grice's work on meaning is that communication is inferential and intentional, in the sense

that a hearer who understands what a speaker meant has inferred a certain type of intention from some of her behaviour: from the fact that she said a certain word or phrase in a certain way, in a certain context.

Grice's theory of conversation is perhaps even more influential in pragmatics than his theory of meaning. Like his work on meaning, Grice's thoughts about pragmatic rules and the difference between what is stated and what is implied by an utterance were developed over a long period and discussed with colleagues and in lectures long before they were published. These ideas were hinted at in 1951 in a footnote of Strawson's book on logic, and in a paper that Grice wrote in 1961 on the apparently unrelated question of perception and sense data. The definitive statement of the theory was made in the William James series of lectures which Grice was invited to give at Harvard University in 1967, and the ideas in those lectures, widely discussed from then on, were instrumental in the development of pragmatics as a distinct field of study during the 1970s. Some individual lectures from that series were published as separate papers over several years, but they were not collected in a definitive form until the posthumous publication in 1989 of some of Grice's collected papers, 'Studies in the Way of Words'.

The theory of conversation introduced the technical term *implicature* (Grice called it a 'term of art') for those parts of a speaker's meaning that are not said but implied, and suggested seeing talk exchanges as governed by a framework of maxims of conversation with an over-arching Cooperative Principle. The term *maxim* was borrowed from Kant, and for Grice, as for Kant, a maxim is a principle that motivates an agent to act in a certain way. The conversational maxims outline how an agent should behave in order to be cooperative in conversation. The link with the notion of implicature is that in cases where what a speaker says does not conform (or does not seem to conform) to the maxims, the hearer may assume that the speaker was, nonetheless, being cooperative by conveying an implicature: something different from, or more than, what was said. Speakers know that hearers can do this, and therefore a speaker can make an utterance with the rational intention to convey an implicature.

One motivation for the notion of implicature was to show that the meaning of linguistic expressions is not the sole determinant of the meaning conveyed on a particular occasion. This should reduce the temptation, to which Grice felt that ordinary language philosophy had sometimes succumbed, to attribute all meaning distinctions found in language use to



ambiguity at the level of the linguistic semantics. Grice advocated the opposite approach: where an explanation of a distinction in speaker meaning can be explained in conversational (i.e. pragmatic) terms, such an explanation is to be preferred to the postulation of otherwise unmotivated semantic ambiguity. This principle is Grice's famous 'Modified Occam's Razor', *Do not multiply senses beyond necessity*: an application of the general form of Occam's Razor, *Do not multiply entities beyond necessity*.

In the William James lectures, Grice presented his work on conversation as motivated by the desire to keep the semantics of logical connectives and quantifiers simple and classical, one application of Modified Occam's Razor. In subsequent work he applied the principle to various questions in the philosophy of language, always arguing for a simple, unitary semantics with meaning differences explained pragmatically.

It is hard to overstate Grice's influence on pragmatics. Modified Occam's Razor, implicatures and, above all, Grice's inferential-intentional view of communication are at the heart of the pragmatic theories of the neo-Griceans, such as Horn, Levinson and Atlas; Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory; and the work of many other influential pragmatic theorists including Kent Bach, Asa Kasher, Herbert Clark, François Recanati and Stephen Neale.

Although it is Grice's work on meaning and conversation that has been influential in pragmatics, it is always worth bearing in mind that Grice was a systematic philosopher. He worked on problems in many different areas of philosophy, including ethics, the philosophy of action and of reasoning, with a unified philosophical programme and methodology. This has been somewhat concealed by the fragmentary nature of his publications and the fact that much of his work remains unpublished, even after the posthumous appearance of 'Studies in the Way of Words' and books on value and on rationality. Across the whole of his work, Grice was committed to understanding humans as rational agents, that is, as beings who have reasons for their actions and attitudes. This meant that he would try to understand actions and attitudes partly in terms of the reasons people might (or should) give for them and the reasoning they might (or should) follow to work out which attitude to adopt or action to take.

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## Lawrence R. Horn

Larry Horn (as he is usually known) is an American linguist and one of the best-known figures in the development of modern pragmatics, particularly the neo-Gricean approach, which he pioneered. His research, as he puts it, has mainly been 'located within the union (if not the intersection) of traditional logic, neo-Gricean pragmatic theory, lexical semantics, and the analysis of negation.' With Gregory Ward he is the co-editor of *The Handbook of Pragmatics* (2003), a definitive collection of articles on the subject with contributions from most of the leading researchers.

Horn was awarded his Ph.D. at the University of California, Los Angeles in 1972. His thesis, which was supervised by the formal semanticist Barbara Partee, 'On the semantic properties of logical operators in English', set the pattern for much of his subsequent work.

Horn has shed interesting light on what might be called the prehistory of pragmatics. Work on presupposition is often said to start with Peter Strawson's argument (against Bertrand Russell) that definite descriptions presuppose the existence of the object described, or with Gottlob Frege's similar view predating Russell's work. Horn traces the concept of presupposition further back to another German nineteenth-century philosopher, Christoph von Sigwart, who held a rather modern, pragmatic view of presupposition, and before him, to mediaeval philosophers such as Peter of Spain, who distinguished in some cases between what a term denotes and what it presupposes.

In the case of implicature, Horn shows that in the nineteenth century, the mathematician and logician Augustus de Morgan and the philosopher John Stuart Mill argued against the view that 'Some *As* are *B*' entails 'Not all *As* are *B*' on what would now be called Gricean grounds. Mill says: 'If I say to any one, "I saw some of your children today", he might be justified in inferring that I did not see them all, not because the words mean it, but because, if I had seen them all, it is most likely that I should have said so'.

Grice proposed that the meanings of words such as 'and', 'if . . . then', 'some' and 'all' were simply those of the classical logical operators (in this case, conjunction, material implication and existential and universal quantification respectively). In cases where the interpretations of utterances containing these words diverge from this simple semantics, Grice thought that the discrepancies should be explained as implicatures.

Horn adopts this Gricean approach. He notes that what explains the fact that using 'some' often communicates 'not all' is that 'some' and 'all' are on a scale: 'some' is more informative than 'all' in that 'All Xs are Y' entails 'Some Xs are Y' but not vice versa. Then the Gricean explanation is that saying 'Some Xs are Y' implicates 'Not all Xs are Y' because a cooperative speaker will try to be informative, and saying 'All Xs are Y' would have been more informative. The speaker did not say that, so we may assume that she knew that it is not the case that all Xs are Y, if we assume that she is well-informed about Xs. Horn also shows that de Morgan and Mill were aware of this point about the importance of the 'epistemic security' of the speaker. If the speaker is not assumed to be well-informed, then she may be taken to be implicating that she does not know whether all Xs are Ys.

Horn suggests that the implicature from *some* to *not all* explains why the concept *not all* is not lexicalized as a simple lexical item: that is, there is no 'nall'. The idea is that since use of *some* generally implicates *not all*, it would be redundant to lexicalize it. This generalization holds, as far as is known, across all languages. It also holds for other logical terms. In each of the following sets, use of the third term implicates the fourth, and in each case, the fourth is not lexicalized: <all, none, some, not all>, <necessary, impossible, possible, possible not>, <and, neither nor, or, not both>. These sets are logical terms associated with the four corners of classical logic's 'square of opposition'. Horn explores and explains the long history of confusion over the relations of the third and fourth items in these sets in his Ph.D. thesis and in his book *A Natural History of Negation* (1989).

Horn has suggested that there are many similar cases to the implicature from *some* to *all*, based on what he calls Q-scales (which are now commonly called 'Horn scales'). A Q-scale is a set of linguistic items that cover the same semantic area and are ordered in terms of semantic strength (i.e. of entailments between sentences containing them). 'Some' and 'all' form part of a larger Q-scale: <some, many, most, all>. Other Q-scales might include <good, excellent> and <cool, cold>. Thus, for example, 'This tea is cool' might implicate that the tea is not cold.

Horn calls these scales Q-scales because he thinks that the implicatures that they give rise to are driven by a principle of maximal informativeness that he calls the Q-principle. This is one of two complementary but opposed principles: the Q-principle and the R-principle. In Horn's system, these principles take the place of Grice's maxims except for the maxims of quality: on this

point, Horn follows a comment of Grice's that the requirement to tell the truth is a superordinate principle.

The Q-principle can be formulated as: Make your contribution sufficient; Say as much as you can (given the R-principle, and the need that the information provided be true). This principle is intended to cover the ground covered in Grice's system by the first maxim of quantity and the first and second manner maxims. The R-principle is intended to cover the ground covered by Grice's second maxim of quantity, his maxim of relation, and his third and fourth maxims of manner. It can be formulated as: Make your contribution necessary; Say no more than you must (given the Q-principle).

The Q-principle places a lower bound on the information in what is said, and is argued to be responsible for upper-bounding implicatures, such as those discussed above where an utterance with 'some' implicates *not all*. Conversely, the R-principle is an upper-bounding principle on what is said, and it is claimed to be responsible for lower bounds on implicatures and more generally on what is communicated. For example, an utterance of 'I broke a finger yesterday' R-implicates that it is one of the speaker's fingers that she broke.

Horn is famous for coining the term 'division of pragmatic labour' for the observation that relatively unmarked expressions are (often) understood as expressing a typical meaning or situation, while relatively marked expressions are (often) understood as expressing an atypical or abnormal situation. For example, the second utterance in the following pairs is phrased slightly unusually:

John stopped the machine.

John got the machine to stop.

This is pink.

This is pale red.

The use of 'got to stop' instead of the simpler 'stop' suggests that John stopped the machine by unusual means: perhaps by pulling the plug, or jamming a spanner in it. 'Pale red' suggests a shade that is not already lexicalized by 'pink'. Analysis of examples of this type in a Gricean framework is due to James McCawley, but the observation goes back to structuralist linguists such as de Saussure and Bloomfield. Horn's claim is that the non-stereotypical

meaning in the marked cases is due to the Q-principle, while the unmarked cases receive a stereotypical reading by the R-principle.

Given that Horn's work has been largely concerned with the connections between pragmatics and logic, it is not surprising that it has been particularly influential on attempts to formalize pragmatics, which often adopt a neo-Gricean approach.

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## Stephen C. Levinson

Stephen Levinson is a linguist and anthropologist. Much of his work has been in pragmatics, where he is one of the leading figures, best known for the theory of politeness he developed with Penelope Brown, his own neo-Gricean pragmatic theory, including his trenchant defence of the notion of default implicatures, and his seminal textbook *Pragmatics* (1983), still an essential work of reference.

Levinson is director of the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen in the Netherlands. His undergraduate degree was in Archaeology and Social Anthropology at Cambridge University. He then took a Ph.D. in Linguistic Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley. He has worked at Cambridge, Stanford University in California and the Australian National University.

Brown and Levinson's politeness theory was set out in their 1978 article 'Universals in language usage: Some politeness phenomena', which was reprinted in an extended form as a book, 'Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage' (1987). Brown and Levinson's theory has become the most influential account of politeness phenomena in the use of language and is largely responsible for the proliferation of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural studies of politeness in speech.

The central notion of the theory is the concept of face, borrowed from the sociologist Erving Goffman, and familiar in phrases such as 'lose face' and 'save face', which seem to have come into English from Chinese languages. In Brown and Levinson's theory, face is the public image that one wants to have, in the form of desires that people attribute to each other. It is divided into two aspects: negative face and positive face. Negative face is the desire to be unimpeded in one's actions. Positive face is the desire to be approved of. This abstract notion of face is said to be culturally universal, and it follows that in all cultures there are actions that have the potential to damage face: Face Threatening Acts (FTAs). Among these are speech acts such as apologies, complaints and requests.

Speakers, according to Brown and Levinson, make use of several different strategies to avoid or mitigate the effects of FTAs. An act that is judged too threatening might simply be avoided. FTAs that are performed may be performed either 'on the record' or 'off the record'. Off the record acts are those that allow plausible deniability. For example, an off the record request would

consist in the speaker letting the hearer know what she wants, without saying it explicitly. FTAs that are on the record may be performed 'baldly, without any redressive action', or they may make use of positive politeness strategies or negative politeness strategies. Positive politeness is directed towards the addressee's positive face, playing up solidarity, similarity or liking, and negative politeness is directed towards his negative face, and tries to show that any interference with the addressee's self-determination will be minimized.

As the leading account of politeness in speech, Brown and Levinson's theory has been the target of a great deal of criticism. It has been claimed that their notion of face is too individualistic to fit many non-Western cultures. Another suggestion is that deferential speech, which Brown and Levinson view as a negative politeness strategy, need not be produced out of a wish to avoid imposing on the hearer, but can simply mark accepted social hierarchy.

With Larry Horn and Jay Atlas, Levinson is one of the main contributors to the neo-Gricean tendency in pragmatics. Horn proposed reducing Grice's conversational maxims (except the quality maxims) to two opposing but complementary principles: the Q-principle (roughly: 'say as much as you can') and the R-principle (roughly: 'say no more than you must'). Levinson proposes three principles in order to restore a distinction made by Grice, but blurred in Horn's schema, between injunctions concerning the amount of linguistic material produced and those concerning the amount of information explicitly conveyed. Levinson's three principles, the Q(uality)-principle, the I(nformativeness)-principle and the M(anner)-principle, can be seen as heuristics, each with two sides: instructions to the speaker about what to say (always bearing in mind the other principles), and to the hearer about what to conclude. The Q-principle tells the speaker to provide as strong a statement as her knowledge permits, and allows the hearer to assume that what is not said is not the case. The I-principle tells the speaker to produce as little linguistic material as possible, and allows the hearer to assume that what is said in a normal way is stereotypically instantiated. The M-principle tells the speaker not to use marked expressions except when the situation is non-stereotypical, and allows the hearer to assume that marked expressions indicate an unusual situation.

Along with these three principles, Levinson argued that a distinction between utterance-type and utterance-token meaning is necessary to capture the facts about implicatures. More recently, in *Presumptive Meaning* (2000), Levinson has mounted a thorough defence of Grice's distinction between



generalized and particularized conversational implicatures against theorists who have dropped it, particularly relevance theorists. Generalized conversational implicatures (GCIs) are defined as those that are normally carried, that is except in special circumstances, by a certain way of saying things. Particularized conversational implicatures (PCIs), on the other hand, require special circumstances: they are not conveyed just by a certain way of saying something, but the saying of it in a certain context. According to Levinson, utterances can have both types of implicature. For example:

A: Did the trip to the zoo go well?

B: Some of the children got into the tigers' enclosure.

Implicatures of B's remark:

GCI: Not all of the children got into the tiger's enclosure.

PCI: The trip did not go well.

GCIs can be seen as default rules associated with lexical items. On this view, there is a default rule that 'some' implicates 'not all', for example. This rule does not apply when some is used in certain linguistic positions, for example in the antecedent clause of a conditional:

If some of the children were eaten, then there will have to be a public enquiry.

This does not implicate: If not all of the children were eaten, then there will have to be a public enquiry.

GCIs can also be suppressed (in Grice and Levinson's terminology, *cancelled*) by linguistic material or by features of the context:

Some of the children got out safely, in fact, all of them did.

The *some* → *not all* implicature is attributed to the Q-principle. According to Levinson, the I-principle and the M-principle also give rise to GCIs.

Levinson argues that GCIs are of particular importance to linguistics and provides several arguments for them. One is Horn's theory that the existence of the implicature from *some* to *not all* is what blocks lexicalization of the

concept 'not all' across languages. A second argument is a design argument. The claim is that default interpretations are necessary for efficient communication given the limitations on the physical channel of communication, that is, that we speak slowly and sequentially. Further arguments aim to show that other pragmatic theories, particularly relevance theory, operate with a view of communication that is too simplistic, and that they cannot account for the phenomena that Levinson explains in terms of GCIs. Levinson also explores possible connections between default interpretations and the defeasible inferences that are seen in non-monotonic logical systems intended to model human reasoning.

In 'Presumptive Meanings', Levinson also contributes to the ongoing debate about the linguistic underdeterminacy of the proposition expressed. He suggests that GCIs contribute to the truth-conditions of utterances: through disambiguation and reference assignment, but also in intrusive constructions, which are constructions where the truth conditions of the whole expression can depend on the implicatures of the parts. These constructions include those formed by the logical operators: conjunction, disjunction, conditionals and so on.

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## John Rogers Searle

John Searle is an American philosopher best known in pragmatics for his work on speech acts. His reformulation of J. L. Austin's ideas has been the most influential version of speech act theory in linguistics and related fields. Searle's notion of 'the Background' is also relevant to pragmatics. This is the idea that utterances and thoughts can only be understood because of a huge number of assumptions which rule out unintended interpretations and which we make without thinking about them.

Searle was born in Denver in 1932. His family moved to New York when he was 13, where he went to an experimental school affiliated to Columbia University. Searle has said that his classmates there were 'intensely political' and that he, as a Fabian socialist, was the class right-winger, crediting his intellectual self-confidence to that period, since 'You had to shout as loud as anybody else or you were never heard.' Searle also attended high schools in New Jersey and Wisconsin, his family moving around because of the Second World War.

Searle started university in Wisconsin, but at the age of 19 he went to Christ Church College, Oxford on a Rhodes scholarship to read Philosophy, Politics and Economics. After graduating he stayed for another four years as a researcher and as a lecturer. At this time he became acquainted with Austin and Paul Grice. In 1959 he got a position at the University of California, Berkeley, where he has worked ever since, and in 1967 he was involved in persuading Grice to move there. Searle is still lecturing there as of autumn 2008, aged 76.

Searle has made well-known contributions to several fields of philosophy, including the philosophy of mind and social philosophy as well as the philosophy of language. In pragmatics and linguistics he is best known for his work on speech acts. This work, which was partly set out in his book *Speech Acts* (1969) and considerably revised in later books, *Expression and Meaning* (1979) and *Intentionality* (1983), was a modification and elaboration of proposals originally made by Austin. Austin wanted to draw attention to performative uses of language, utterances that change the world rather than (or as well as) saying something about it. He suggested that all utterances, not just the clear performatives, should be seen as actions: 'speech acts'. On this view, even descriptive utterances such as assertions do something. Searle adopted Austin's framework, including his distinction between the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts that utterances perform.

Austin had suggested that speech acts might fall into classes, and proposed five: behabitives, commissives, exercitives, expositives and verdictives. For example, promises are commissives, since they commit the speaker to a certain course of action; statements and assertions are expositives, acts that give information; and finding a defendant guilty and ruling that a batsman is out would be verdictives. In his later work on speech acts, Searle also divided speech acts into five types. He kept commissives, and renamed behabitives as expressives and expositives as representative acts, changing their definitions somewhat. His remaining classes are declaratives and directives, which together replace Austin's verdictives and exercitives.

Searle tried to answer some obvious questions about the classification of speech acts: Why are speech acts grouped together in classes? Why five classes and not more or fewer? He proposed that the classes of speech acts can be distinguished from each other by two properties of speech acts, the 'direction of fit' and what it is that they express.

The phrase 'direction of fit' comes from Austin, but Searle uses it in a different sense, as a label for a distinction inspired by something said by the philosopher Elisabeth Anscombe. Consider a list of food items. It might be an inventory of the contents of a kitchen. If so, it has a word-to-world direction of fit: the items on the list should (if the list is to be accurate) match the items that are actually in the kitchen. On the other hand, it might be a shopping list, in which case it has a world-to-word direction of fit: the person doing the shopping is supposed to make sure that he selects items that match the list. The comparison with speech acts is obvious. An assertion is like the inventory. The speaker of an assertion puts forward the proposition expressed by her utterance as a true description of some part of the world. Thus representative speech acts such as assertions have word-to-world direction of fit. On the other hand, orders and requests, which are directives in Searle's classification scheme, have world-to-word direction of fit according to Searle: the speaker is trying to get the hearer to make the world conform to what she says.

According to Searle there are four possible directions of fit. As well as word-to-world and world-to-word, there is the double direction of fit – both word-to-world and world-to-word – and the null direction of fit. Searle proposes that declarations have the double direction of fit, since to utter one successfully is to bring about a change in the world: the words uttered change the world so that the world fits the words. Expressives have the null direction of fit: they express an emotional attitude towards a fact presumed to be true: for example, 'I am sorry that I tripped you.' The last remaining speech act type

is commissives, which share the world-to-word direction of fit with directives. These two types are distinguished by what they express, Searle claims: directives express a desire attributed to the addressee and commissives express a intention belonging to the speaker.

This taxonomy of speech acts has been influential, but has come in for serious criticism. One problem is that it lumps together questions with orders and requests, seeing questions as requests for information. But questions do not necessarily expect a response, and in any case this classification conflicts with the intuition that stating, questioning and ordering are three fundamentally different types of speech act. Another problem with Searle's category of directives is that imperatives are often produced with no expectation that the hearer will or should desire what is expressed, for example in recipes: 'First take two eggs . . .'. Bach and Harnish have criticized one of Searle's types, declarations, for running together speech acts that simply change the world – naming a ship, for example – with speech acts that pronounce and make official a verdict – for example, finding a defendant guilty.

Austin had proposed that speech acts have felicity conditions: conditions that have to be met for the act to be performed successfully. Failure to meet certain conditions could cause the act to fail entirely – a misfire – and failure to be sincere leads to a different kind of failure – abuse. Searle made two proposals here. He divided felicity conditions into four categories: propositional content condition, preparatory condition, sincerity condition and essential condition. Secondly, he proposed that these felicity conditions jointly constitute the illocutionary force of the utterance.

Searle's concept of the 'Background', introduced in 'Intentionality', is also of relevance to pragmatics. By the Background, Searle means a set of things that we take for granted unconsciously, and against which we are able to understand intentional phenomena such as beliefs, utterances, experiences and interpretations.

On Searle's account, there are many ways of misunderstanding, and they are typically ruled out without considering them. If I order a steak in a restaurant, he says, I do not expect it to be delivered to my house or encased in concrete, although the words I have used do not explicitly rule out these possibilities. These possibilities do not occur to speaker or hearer because they are not compatible with the Background. However, Searle does not explain *how* the Background rules out certain interpretations and rules in others.

Some examples that Searle uses to illustrate his discussion of the Background have been taken into pragmatics are illustrations of lexical modulation. He points out, for example, that the way 'cut' is normally understood is different in 'Cut the cake' and 'Cut the grass.'

Searle has also been concerned with questions about how the use of language relates to linguistic structure. He argues that the nature of language cannot be separated from the functions of language and how it is used by speakers. According to Searle, his position is unlike many philosophers' in that he wants a naturalistic account of language: that is, he wants 'to treat language as a natural extension of non-linguistic biological capacities.' This much is taken for granted by many linguists who would not, however, agree that the nature of language and its functions are one and the same. Searle was one of several philosophers engaged in a debate with Noam Chomsky on these issues during the 1970s. Searle wrote that it is 'pointless and perverse' to study language abstracting away from its use in communication. In reply Chomsky expressed scepticism that referring to the function of communication 'gives us any help with the central problems of meaning'.

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## Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson

Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson are best known in pragmatics for relevance theory, which is set out in their book 'Relevance: Communication and Cognition', published in 1986, and to the development of which they continue to contribute.

Sperber is a French social and cognitive scientist, working at C.N.R.S. (the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*) in Paris. As a young anthropologist he carried out fieldwork in Ethiopia, where he was once asked to join a dragon hunt.

Sperber has proposed an 'epidemiological' approach to culture, on which explaining culture is a matter of identifying the causal factors that make specific ideas, practices and artefacts propagate across populations and generations. He argues that detailed attention to psychological mechanisms is needed in order to explain the propagation of cultural items (just as detailed attention to physiology is needed to explain the propagation of diseases).

This interest in the role of psychological mechanisms in the propagation of culture has led Sperber into psychological research. He is an advocate of the evolutionary psychology thesis that the mind/brain is 'massively modular' (a description he was the first to use), that is, is made up of autonomous mental devices or 'modules'. Sperber has also published experimental work with various co-authors on topics related to the psychology of reasoning. This work has helped to launch the new field of experimental pragmatics.

Deirdre Wilson was trained in philosophy at Oxford and in linguistics at MIT, where her doctoral thesis was supervised by Noam Chomsky. Her main research interests are in pragmatics: her book *Presuppositions and Non-Truth-Conditional Semantics* proposed a largely pragmatic account of presuppositional phenomena, while *Modern Linguistics: The Results of Chomsky's Revolution* (written jointly with Neil Smith) defended a strict separation between grammar and pragmatics. Her long-standing collaboration with Dan Sperber has led to publications on a wide variety of pragmatic topics, from disambiguation and reference resolution to rhetoric and style.

Wilson has also published a novel, *Slave of the Passions*, whose title derives from Hume's famous comment that, 'reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions'. Since 1970 she has worked in the department of linguistics at University College London, helping to establish UCL as a leading centre of research in pragmatics, and contributing to the development of pragmatics worldwide.

Relevance theory's account of communication was developed as an attempt at a scientific study of the subject based on Grice's insight that implicatures and speaker meaning in general are speaker intentions that are inferred by hearers. According to Sperber and Wilson, Grice's 'Logic and Conversation' lectures radically undermine what they call the code model of communication. They identify this model as the prevailing view of communication from antiquity to twentieth-century information theory.

Relevance theory's account of communication is thoroughly Gricean in spirit, but in the interest of developing a cognitively realistic theory it makes considerable modifications to the specifics of Grice's ideas as well as dropping a number of Gricean concepts and proposing many innovations.

Grice's definition of speaker meaning has been attacked on the grounds that there are cases which meet his definition but intuitively are not cases of meaning. Sperber and Wilson are interested in a theory of communication rather than a conceptual analysis of meaning. They propose that such a theory should cover all actions that are openly intended to convey information, that is, any action made with the intention of conveying some information (the informative intention) and the higher-order intention that the informative intention be recognized (the communicative intention). This means that for Sperber and Wilson, unlike Grice, cases of communicative showing (e.g. of a photograph of a situation) are treated as falling in a natural class with other linguistic and non-linguistic communication. In fact the idea of showing is central to Sperber and Wilson's conception of utterances as *ostensive stimuli*. For them, an utterance is (the production of) a stimulus that is openly intended as a clue to something that the speaker wants to convey. The hearer uses the utterance as a cue for the production of an interpretation which involves (in general) both explicit and implicit meaning and an intended context in which the utterance is processed. In successful communication this interpretation will be close enough to the one that the speaker intended. Relevance theory explains this coordination between speaker and hearer as the outcome of the relevance theoretic comprehension procedure, which results from the Communicative Principle of Relevance, itself a consequence in the communicative domain of a general cognitive tendency to maximize information gain while minimizing processing cost.

Relevance theory proposes that cognition (which includes reasoning, perception and memory as well as communication) is governed by the cognitive principle of relevance: *Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance*, where relevance is defined as a property of inputs



to cognitive processes. For each input, the relevance is greater if the cognitive effects of processing it are greater, and it is less if the processing cost is higher.

In the domain of ostensive-inferential communication there is a further principle, according to relevance theory. Ostensive stimuli give rise to a presumption that they will be relevant to a certain degree. The idea is that the speaker has taken up some of the hearer's attention by producing an utterance, so she is giving a tacit guarantee that what she provides will be worth the effort of processing it, and indeed that it will be the best (most relevant) utterance from the hearer's point of view that she was able and willing to provide. The Communicative Principle of Relevance is that every act of communicative ostension raises a presumption of its own optimal relevance.

This Communicative Principle takes the place in Sperber and Wilson's theory of Grice's Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims. In presenting the maxims, Grice had said that his maxim of relation ('Be relevant') concealed in its terseness 'a number of problems that exercise me a good deal' and that it might obviate the need for a specific maxim against overinformativeness. Following up these suggestions, Sperber and Wilson ended up with a single communicative principle of relevance and no maxims.

The Communicative Principle is unlike Grice's maxims in several respects. It is intended to be purely descriptive, not normative: speakers and hearers' communicative behaviour conforms to it because they are built that way, not because they believe they should. Another difference is that there is no question of deliberately violating the principle: if relevance theory is right, people cannot violate the principles of relevance any more than they could violate the laws of gravity or evolution. For the purpose of understanding or modelling cognition, a single principle that cannot be violated is a better bet than around a dozen maxims which can give rise to implicatures through blatant violation, apparent violation or clashes.

The Communicative Principle of Relevance does more work than Grice's maxims, since Sperber and Wilson claim that it governs the retrieval of all inferred material in the overall interpretation, which includes a great deal of what is explicitly communicated as well as implicatures. Sperber and Wilson assume that the language system (grammar) and communication abilities are distinct and separate. Language is a code, while communication involves inference to the best explanation of the speaker's utterances, so comprehension of a linguistic utterance involves decoding the linguistic material which then becomes an input for pragmatic inference. Sperber and Wilson were among

the first to explore the idea that linguistically encoded material in an utterance typically falls short of the proposition expressed by the speaker. In such cases it is not clear whether 'what is said' is what the words say or the proposition the speaker expressed. Sperber and Wilson therefore coined the term *explicature* for assumptions explicitly communicated by an utterance.

A lot of recent work in relevance theory and elsewhere has focused on the consequences of this linguistic underdeterminacy of meaning. One recent development is an account of loose use, hyperbole and metaphor in terms of occasion-specific broadening and narrowing of the concept expressed by a word.

Sperber and Wilson also have a radical theory of irony, partly put forward before the publication of 'Relevance'. The claim is that an ironic utterance is one which (1) achieves relevance through resemblance to a thought or another utterance (i.e. is 'interpretive'); (2) expresses a dissociative attitude towards the target thought or utterance; and (3) is not explicitly marked as interpretive or dissociative.

Other aspects of relevance theory's account of communication include its theory of context selection, and of the place of indeterminacy in communication. These aspects of the account rest on the notions of *manifestness* and *mutual manifestness*.

A number of other pragmatic theorists work within the framework of relevance theory, including Robyn Carston, perhaps best known for her work on the explicit/implicit distinction in communication, and Diane Blakemore, who pioneered work on procedural meaning, which is used in relevance theory's accounts of pronouns and discourse connectives.

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# Index

Page numbers in bold indicate entries for key terms and key thinkers.

- abductive inference **17**
- abuse **17–18**, 176, 228
- accessibility **18**, 24, 36, 64, 101
- accommodation **18–19**, 41, 151
- addressee 1, 8–9, 55, 57, 59, 85, 100, 129, 138, 142, 143, 144, 153, 182, 223, 228 *see also* hearer
- ad hoc concept **19**, 123, 124
- adjacency pair **19–20**, 52
- aizuchi* 78
- ambiguity **20–1**, 47, 64, 111, 127, 146, 158, 165, 187, 207, 215–6
  - lexical 20, **108–9**, 146
  - structural 20, **183–4**
- anaphora **21**, 59, 100
- anti-inferential theories of communication **21–2**
- argumentation theory **22**
- assertions 19, **22–3**, 33, 38, 49, 62, 73, 104, 137, 151, 157, 157–8, 159, 163, 168, 178, 179, 201, 202, 205–6, 226–7
- Atlas, Jay David 132, 216, 223
- attributive concept **23**
- Austin, John Langshaw 5, 10, 11–12, 17, 24, 25, 32, 37, 54, 63, 65, 70–71, 73, 74, 76, 86, 91, 113, 127, 137, 153, 168, 176, 178–80, 182, 192, 194, **200–3**, 204, 212–13, 226, 227, 228
- Bach, Kent 41–2, 46, 80, 97, 118, 160, 199, **204–7**, 216
  - and Robert Harnish 24, 34, 63, 68, 113, 182, 195, 204–5, 228
- behabitive **24**, 227
- Blakemore, Diane 233
- bridging **24**, 90
- broadening **24–5**, 109, 132, 233
- Brown, Penelope; and Stephen Levinson 76, 143–5, 222–3
- Burge, Tyler 22
- calculability **26**, 93, 94
- cancellability **26**, 45, 93, 94–5
- Carston, Robyn 16, 233
- cautious optimism **26–7**
- character/content distinction **27**, 99, 155
- Chomsky, Noam Avram 30, 35, 128, **208–11**, 228
- circumlocution **27–8**
- Clark, Herbert 24
  - and Richard Gerrig 106
- code model of communication **28**, 79, 81, 119–20, 174, 175, 231
- cognitive effects **28–29**, 42, 67, 153, 166, 167
- cognitive environment **29**, 115
- cognitive linguistics **29–32**, 125
- Cognitive Principle of Relevance 10, **32**, 35, 231
- comment; and topic 103, **187–8**
- commissive **32**, 179, 180, 194, 205, 227, 228
- common ground 19, **33**, 41, 149
- communicative competence **33**
- communicative intention **33–4**, 103, 135, 183, 231
- Communicative Presumption **34**, 182, 205
- Communicative Principle of Relevance 10, 32, **34–5**, 107, 153, 167, 231–2

- competence/performance  
 distinction **35**, 209, 211
- compositionality **35–6**, 110,
- concept **36–7**, 154, 210, 233  
 ad hoc **19**, 123, 124  
 attributive **23**  
 propositional **157**
- conceptual meaning **37**, 154
- constative **37**, 73, 74, 137, 178, 179,  
 202–3  
 and 'hereby' test 86
- content **38**, 46, 62,  
 dictive 44, 62  
 distinction between content and  
 character 27, 99, 155  
 explicit and implicit 118, 154, 197  
 expressive 38, **75**  
 formal 44, **62**  
 truth-conditional 44
- context 4, 14, 20, 26, 27, 33, **38–42**,  
 43, 45, 54–7, 59, 83–4, 95,  
 99–100, 109, 113–14, 156,  
 192, 224
- Context Change Potential 66
- context sensitivity of meaning 27, 36,  
 55, 59, 99, 100, 112
- contextual effects 29, **42**
- conventional implicatures 7, 26, **44–6**,  
 62, 92, 134, 155, 206  
 the non-existence of 45–6, 206
- conversational implicature 26, 27, 44,  
 45, 83–4, 92–6, 97–8, 133,  
 165, 193, 224–5
- conversational maxims 1, 9–10, 26,  
 28, 42–3, **46–52**, 67, 74, 77,  
 86, 88, 93, 100–1, 145, 162,  
 215, 219–20, 223, 232
- clash between 48–9
- exploitation of 49, **73–4**, 93, 145
- of manner 9, 28, 47, 48, 49, 50,  
 51, 67, 86, 94, 125, 128, 133,  
 162, 169, 220
- opting out of 50, **135**
- of quality 9, 47–8, 49, 50, 51, 77,  
 88, 106, 113, 122, 162, 171,  
 175, 197, 205, 219–20
- of quantity 9, 47–8, 49, 50, 51,  
 162, 169, 186, 220
- of relation 9, 47–8, 50, 51, 169,  
 220, 232
- violation of 43, 48, 49–50, 51, 74,  
 77, 88, 110, 122, 133, 145,  
 175, 186, 197, 232
- Conversation Analysis 41, **52–3**,  
 65–6, 189–90
- Cooperative Principle 9–10, **42–3**,  
 47–50, 64, 93, 135, 145, 215,  
 232
- co-text 39, **43–4**
- CP see Cooperative Principle
- declaration **54**, 179, 180, 181, 227,  
 228
- definite description **54**, 55, 126, 148,  
 151–2, 164–5
- deixis **54–9**, 60, 100, 102, 142  
 discourse deixis 58–9, 60  
 and indexicality 55, 100  
 social 59, 142  
 spatial 57–8  
 temporal 58
- demonstrative 55, 57, **60**, 154
- de re/de dicto distinction **60–1**
- descriptive use **61**, 103–4
- de se readings **61–2**
- dictiveness-formality distinction 44,  
**62**
- direction of fit 22, 32, **62–3**, 168,  
 179–80, 227–8
- directive act **63**, 179–80, 181, 205,  
 227–8
- direct speech **63**
- direct speech act **63–4**, 102
- disambiguation 4, **64**, 69, 100, 122,  
 158, 225
- discourse 39, 58–9, **65**, 66, 103,  
 145–6  
 interactional 145–6  
 transactional 145–6
- discourse analysis **65–6**
- Discourse Representation Theory 15,  
**66**, 79

- division of pragmatic labour 12, **66–7**, 129, 169, 220
- DRT see Discourse Representation Theory
- echoic use **68**
- effectives **68**, 195
- ellipsis **68–9**, 80, 98
- entailment **69–70**, 104  
and implicatures 2  
and presuppositions 149
- Erickson, Thomas D 172
- essential condition **70**, 228
- etiolation of language **70–1**
- exercitive **71**, 194, 227
- exhibitive utterance **71–2**, 161
- experimental pragmatics 15, **72**
- explicatures **72–3**, 91, 98, 117–18, 167, 199, 233  
basic-level 73, 117  
higher-level 73, **87–8**, 118  
weak 140, 196
- explicit performative 64, **73**, 154
- exploitation (of maxims) 49, **73–4**, 93, 145
- expositive **74**, 227
- expressive act 24, **74**, 180, 227
- expressive content 38, **75**, 98
- face **76**, 143–4, 145, 222–3
- face-threatening act 143–4, 222–3
- Fauconnier, Gilles 15, 29, 30
- felicity conditions 11, 17–8, 37, 70, **76**, 127, 137, 176, 178, 182, 202–3, 228
- figurative speech **76–7**, 92, 107, 112–3, 121–2, 197–8
- filter **77**, 150
- focus **77–8**, 161
- folk pragmatics **78–9**
- formal pragmatics 15, 41, **79**, 157
- fragment 69, **79–80**, 98
- Fraser, Bruce 143
- free enrichment **80–1**, 98, 112, 147, 170, 191
- FTA see face-threatening act
- functionalism 29, **81**, 82, 229
- functions of language **81–2**, 120, 229
- game-theoretic pragmatics **83**
- Gazdar, Gerald 14, 151
- GCI see generalized conversational implicature
- generalized conversational implicature 27, 45, **83–4**, 95, 193, 224–5
- Gibbs, Ray 29
- Goffman, Erving 76, 143, 222
- Grice, Herbert Paul 1–3, 5, 7, 8–12, 14, 17, 18, 26, 28, 42–3, 44–52, 62, 64, 71, 73–4, 79, 92–6, 100, 106–7, 116–7, 118–19, 122, 126–7, 130–1, 142–3, 149, 151, 163, 177, 187 197–8, 200, 204, 206, **212–7**, 218–9, 226, 231
- Grice's maxims, see conversational maxims
- Grice's theory of conversation 9–10, 28, 42–3, 46–51, 73–4, 92–6, 117, 135, 145, 195, 197, 212, 215–6
- Grice's theory of meaning 8–9, 10–11, 34, 130–1, 177, 212, 213–5
- Groenendijk, Jeroen 66
- Harnish, Robert; and Kent Bach 24, 34, 63, 68, 113, 182, 195, 204–5, 228
- hearer 9, 33–4, 40–1, 71–2, **85**, 161
- hearsay particle **85**
- hedge 50, **85–6**
- Heim, Irene 66, 151
- 'hereby' test 73, **86**, 154, 203
- heuristic 15, **87**, 128, 132, 166, 167, 223
- higher-level explicature 73, **87–8**, 118
- hole **88**, 150
- homograph 108
- homophone 108
- Horn, Lawrence R 10, 13–4, 52, 66–7, 132, 162, 169, 171, 216, **218–21**, 223



- hyperbole 3, 19, 25, 49, 76–7, **88–9**, 109, 110, 113, 123, 175, 233
- I-implicature **90**, 105
- illocutionary act 34, 54, 63, 68, 74, **90–1**, 138, 157, 167, 178–182, 192, 195, 201–2
- illocutionary force 5, 63–4, 87–8, 102, 138, 179–80, 192, 202–3, 204–5, 228
- implicated premise **91**, 196
- implicatures 1–3, 10, 26, 27, 28, 42–3, 44–6, 47–51, 73–4, 83–4, **92–7**, 118, 132, 133, 135, 143, 158–9, 165, 170–1, 197, 204, 206–7, 215–6, 218–21, 224–5, 232
- bridging **24**, 90
- conventional 7, 26, **44–6**, 62, 92, 134, 155, 206
- conversational 26, 27, 44, 45, 83–4, 92–96, 97–8, 133, 165, 193, 224–5
- generalized conversational 27, 45, **83–4**, 95, 193, 224–5
- implicated premises **91**, 196
- strong **183**
- weak 140, **196**
- implicature **97**, 207
- indeterminacy 96, **97–8**, 124, 140, 196, 233
- indexicalism **98**, 147, 191
- indexicality 55, **99–101** *see also* reference assignment and deixis 55, 100
- indirect speech **101–2**, 206
- indirect speech act 63–4, 102
- inference to the best explanation 1, 17, 87, 94, 96, 167
- information structure 103, 187
- informative intention 33, **103**, 135, 183, 231
- informativeness maxims *see* conversational maxims of quantity
- interpretive use 23, 61–2, 68, **103–4**, 106–7
- intonation 77, 103, **104–5**, 160–1, 187
- I-principle 52, 90, **105**, 125, 129, 223
- irony 3, 49, 68, 76–7, **105–7**, 126, 198, 233
- Kaplan, David Benjamin 27
- Karttunen, Lauri 18, 151
- Kasher, Asa 43, 211, 216
- Kempson, Ruth 14, 151
- Lakoff, George 29  
and Mark Johnson 123
- Langacker, Ronald 29, 31
- Langendoen, D Terrance 150
- Language of Thought hypothesis, the **108**
- Lasersohn, Peter 147
- Leech, Geoffrey 52, 143, 144
- Levinson, Stephen C 10, 14, 52, 84, 87, 90, 105, 125, 128, 132, 162, 169, 190, 193, 216, **222–5**  
and Penelope Brown 76, 143–5, 222–3
- lexical ambiguity 20, **108–9**, 146
- lexical modulation 25, 36, 77, **109**, 110, 114, 132, 229
- lexical pragmatics 24, 56, **109–10**, 131
- lies 26, 49–50, **110**, 130, 176
- linguistic meaning 6–7, 27, 44, **110**, 111, 117–19, 173, 187, 197, 206–7
- linguistic underdeterminacy  
thesis 15–16, **111–12**, 118, 158, 206–7, 225, 233
- literal use **112–13**, 114
- locutionary act 91, **113**, 139, 168, 178, 201
- loose use 4, 19, 25, 109, **113–14**, 146–7, 194, 233
- manifestness 29, 41, 97–8, 103, **115**, 129, 135, 136, 140, 196, 233
- manner maxims *see* conversational maxims of manner

- markedness 66–7, 105, **115**, 126,  
129, 169, 220–1, 223
- Martin, Robert 106
- massive modularity 15, **116**, 230
- Mattson, Mark E 172
- maxims *see* conversational maxims
- meaning 1–13, 20–21, 27, 30, 35–6,  
46, 110, **116–19**, 127–8, 146,  
173
- conceptual **37**, 154
- context sensitivity of 27, 36, 55, 59,  
99, 100, 112
- conventional 7, 62, 96, 97, 131,  
206, 213
- dictive 44, **62**
- encoded 7, 18–19, 25, 44, 55, 99,  
109, 110, 19, 123, 187, 193,  
197, 199
- formal 44, **62**
- linguistic 6–7, 27, 44, **110**, 111,  
117–19, 173, 187, 197, 206–7
- natural **130–1**, 213
- non-natural **130–1**, 177, 213
- procedural 37, 46, 134, **154–5**, 233
- speaker 1–6, 8–9, 47, 62, 96,  
116–9, 126–7, 129, 131, **177**,  
192, 193, 205, 213–5, 231
- theory of *see* Grice's theory of  
meaning
- timeless 44, **187**
- utterance 117–8, 177, 193
- meiosis 191
- mental representation 108, **119**, 124
- message 28, 81–2, **119–20**, 175
- metalinguistic **120**
- metalinguistic negation **120–1**, 152
- metaphor 3, 19, 31, 76–7, 110,  
112–3, **121–4**, 132, 146, 175
- metarepresentation **124**
- metonymy 31–2, **125**, 146
- Millikan, Ruth 22
- M-implicature **125–6**
- mindreading 15, **126**
- M-intention 8–9, **126–7**, 177, 213–4
- misfire 76, **127**, 137, 228
- Modified Occam's Razor **127–8**, 216
- modularity 15, 116, **128**, 230
- M-principle 52, 87, 105, 125, **128–9**,  
162, 223, 224
- mutual knowledge 40, 115, **129**
- naive optimism 26, **130**
- narrowing 25, 90, 109, **130**, 233
- natural and nonnatural  
meaning **131–2**, 213
- Neale, Stephen 151, 216
- Neo-Gricean pragmatics 10, 15, 52,  
90, 105, 125, 128, **132**, 162,  
168, 169, 193, 216, 219–21,  
223
- non-detachability 94, **133**
- non-truth-conditional meaning 7,  
44–6, **133–4**
- opaque contexts 60, 173
- opting-out (of CP and maxims) 50,  
**135**
- oratio obliqua* *see* indirect speech
- oratio recta* *see* direct speech
- ostensive act 34, **135**, 136, 153, 166,  
192, 231–2
- ostensive-inferential model 33–4,  
**135–6**, 192, 232
- parenthetical 85, **136**
- parody **136–7**
- performative 37, 68, 73, 86, **137–8**,  
153–4, 160, 178, 180, 194,  
202–3, 226
- perlocutionary act **138**, 178–9,  
201–2,
- Peters, Stanley 151
- phatic act 113, **138**, 168, 178
- phatic communication **139**
- phonic act 113, **139**, 178
- plug 88, **140**, 150
- poetic effect 96, **140**, 196
- politeness 48, 52, 76, **140–6**, 222–3
- polysemy 21, 108–9, 125, **146**, 184
- pragmatic halo **146–7**
- pragmatic intrusion **147**, 191
- preparatory conditions **147–8**, 228
- presumption of optimal relevance 10,  
32, 34, 65, **153**, 166, 232

- presuppositions 5–6, 14, 18–19, 77, 88, 140, **148–52**, 152–3, 155–6, 189, 218, 230  
 and filters **77**, 150  
 and holes **88**, 150  
 and plugs 88, **140**, 150  
 projection problem of 150–1, **155–6**  
 presupposition trigger 148, 150, 151, **152–3**  
 primary performative 73, **153–4**  
 procedural meaning 37, 46, 134, **154–5**, 233  
 processing effort 18, 153, **155**, 166, 167  
 projection problem 150–1, **155–6**  
 proposition 14, 36, 38, 41, 111, **156**, 189  
 propositional attitude 60, 87, 140, **157**  
 propositional concept **157**  
 propositional fragment *see* propositional radical  
 propositional radical **160**, 199, 207  
 proposition expressed 38, 60, 69, 69, 80, 98, 99, 111–2, **157–60**, 164, 170, 171–2, 191, 207, 225, 233  
 prosody 104, **160–1**  
 protreptic utterance 71–2, **161**  
  
 Q-implicature 67, 132, **162**  
 Q-principle 10, 52, 67, 128, 132, **162**, 169, 219–21, 223, 224  
 Q-scale **162–3**, 171, 219  
 quessertion **163**  
  
 Recanati, François 80, 170, 199, 207, 216  
 reference assignment 4, 64, 100–1, 118, 158, **164**  
 referential/attributional distinction **164–5**  
 register **165**  
 reinforceability **165**  
 relevance 10, 29, 32, 34, 52, 153, 155, **166**, 166–7, 231–3  
 relevance maxim *see* conversational maxim of relation  
 relevance theoretic comprehension procedure 34, 87, **166**, 231  
 relevance theory 10, 28–9, 32, 33–4, 42, 52, 72–3, 87–8, 91, 103, 115, 135–6, 153, 154–5, 166, **166–7**, 196, 231–3  
 repetition **167**  
 representative act 22, 74, **167–8**, 179, 227  
 rheme 103, 187  
 rhetic act 113, **168**, 178  
 R-implicature **168**, 169  
 R-principle 10, 52, 67, 105, 132, 162, 168, **169**, 219–21, 223  
 Russell, Bertrand 54, 99, 151, 208, 218  
  
 saturation 80, 147, **170**, 191, 199  
 Savin, Harris 150  
 scalar implicature 132, 162–3, **170–1**  
 scope principle **171–2**  
 Searle, John Rogers 22, 24, 32, 54, 63, 68, 70, 74, 109, 148, 167, 176, 179–80, 202, **226–9**  
 semantic illusion 72, **172**  
 semantic innocence **172–3**  
 semantics 6–7, 13, 14, 36, 38, 66, 69, 79, 116, 119, 127, **173**, 173–4, 180, 188, 189, 208, 210, 216  
 semantics-pragmatics interface 6–7, 79, **173–4**  
 semiotics **174**  
 sentence 6–7, 8–9, 35–6, 55, 68–9, 111–2, **174**, 180–1, 188, 192, 197, 209  
 signal 28, 119, **175**  
 simile 122, **175**  
 sincerity condition **176**, 228  
 Smith, Neil 209, 230  
 sophisticated understanding 26, **176**  
 speaker 9, 33–4, 40–1, **176–7**  
 speaker meaning 1–6, 8–9, 47, 62, 96, 116–9, 126–7, 129, 131, **177**, 192, 193, 205, 213–5, 231

- speech acts 5, 11, 17–8, 22, 34, 37, 62–3, 70, 73, 86, 87–8, 113, 127, 136, 138, 139, 147–8, 153–4, 160, 167–8, 176, **178–82**, 192, 201–3, 204–6, 226–8
- Austin's classification of 227
- Bach and Harnish's classification of 205
- behabitive **24**, 227
- commissive **32**, 179, 180, 194, 205, 227, 228
- declaration **54**, 179, 180, 181, 227, 228
- direct **63–4**, 102
- directive **63**, 179–80, 181, 205, 227–8
- effective **68**, 195
- exercitive **71**, 194, 227
- expositive **74**, 227
- expressive 24, **74**, 180, 227
- felicity conditions of 11, 17–8, 37, 70, **76**, 127, 137, 176, 178, 182, 202–3, 228
- indirect 63–4, **102**
- representative 22, 74, **167–8**, 179, 227
- Searle's classification of 227
- verdictive 68, **194–5**, 227
- Speech Act Schema **182**
- Sperber, Dan 116, 230
- and Deirdre Wilson 15, 28, 41, 43, 46, 52, 106, 113, 140, 166, 205, 216, **230–3**
- Stalnaker, Robert 14, 18, 33, 149, 151
- stimulus 18, 28–9, 34, 42, 153, 155, 166, **182–3**, 231
- Stokhof, Martin 66
- strong implicature **183**, 196
- structural ambiguity 20, **183–4**
- synecdoche 125, **184**
- syntax 13, 21, 81, **184–5**, 209–10
- tautology **186**
- theme 103, 187
- theory of conversation see Grice's theory of conversation
- theory of meaning see Grice's theory of meaning
- timeless meaning 44, **187**
- topic; and comment 103, **187–8**
- truth conditions 7, **188**
- truthfulness maxim see conversational maxims of quality
- truth-functional **188–9**
- truth value 149, 157, 188, **189**
- turn 52, **189–90**
- turn allocational component 190
- Turner, Mark 29
- type-token distinction **190**, 193, 223
- unarticulated constituent 147, **191**
- understatement 3, 49, 77, 105–6, **191**
- uptake 138, 179, 182, **192**
- utterance 8, 10, 17, 21–2, 34, 38, 41, 61–2, 65, 71–2, 79–80, 85, 135–6, 161, 174, 175, 176–7, 177, 183, **192–3**, 213, 231
- utterance meaning 117–8, 177, 193  
see also speaker meaning
- utterance-type meaning 187, 190, **193**, 223–4
- utterer's occasion-meaning 193
- utterance-type occasion-meaning 190, **193**
- vagueness **194**
- verdictive 68, **194–5**, 227, 228
- weak communication 98, 124, 140, **196**
- weak implicature 140, 183, **196**
- what is said 13, 42, 44–5, 48–9, 62, 93–4, 97, 113, 117–8, 158, **197–9**, 206–7, 220, 233
- Wilson, Deirdre 1, 14, 114, 151, 230
- and Dan Sperber 15, 28, 41, 43, 46, 52, 106, 113, 140, 166, 205, 216, **230–3**